

Nutrition Guidelines for Pelvic Radiation Therapy

Gas in the large bowel comes from two sources: swallowed air and from fermentation by gut bacteria. Following these guidelines will help reduce gas in your large bowel during your CT simulation and radiation treatments and manage diarrhea, which may develop in **some** individuals.

Begin following these guidelines 5 to 7 days before your CT simulation (marking) appointment and continue to follow these guidelines until you have finished your radiation treatments.

If you have not had a bowel movement the day before your CT simulation (marking) appointment, take two Senokot S™ tablets (with warm milk, if milk is tolerated) after your evening meal.

How to reduce gas in your large bowel

Decrease swallowed air

Swallowed air makes up 90% of the gas in our digestive tract or gut. Some of this air leaves the stomach by burping or belching. The rest passes through our digestive tract and is released through the rectum (passing gas or flatulence).

To swallow less air:

- Eat food slowly and try to relax while eating
- Chew food well and with your mouth closed
- Avoid gulping fluids. Drink fluids from a glass
- Avoid drinking straws or drinking from bottles or cans
- Drink fluids lukewarm instead of hot. Air is swallowed when hot drinks are sipped
- Avoid carbonated drinks like pop, beer and carbonated water

Reduce gas made by gut bacteria

The rest of the gas in our digestive tract comes from bacteria in the large intestine. These naturally occurring bacteria feed on undigested carbohydrates and fiber from the foods we eat.

Try to identify and avoid foods that cause discomfort to your digestive system. Make sure you are having regular bowel movements so that gas does not remain trapped in your bowel.

Regular physical activity and eating at regular intervals can also help.



The following foods may increase gas and should be **limited** during the course of your radiation therapy:

Vegetables	broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, cabbage, kale, onions, garlic
Fruits	dried fruit, prunes, oranges, bananas
Legumes	dried beans, peas, lentils
Sugar alcohols	xylitol, sorbitol, mannitol

Managing diarrhea caused by radiation therapy

Radiation given to the pelvic region can lead to looser bowel movements or diarrhea for **some** individuals. If this occurs, it will often develop later in the course of treatment and can sometimes continue after treatment has been completed.

Making changes to your food choices may help control diarrhea. It is important to speak with your health care team. They may recommend medication to ease this side effect.

If you are having diarrhea, here are some suggestions:

- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid per day, water, plain broth, or sports drinks (Gatorade™ or Powerade™) in order to stay hydrated.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Drink liquids at room temperature and sip *slowly* throughout the day.
- Avoid eating large meals. Eat smaller, more frequent meals and snacks.
- Try lying down after meals.
- Eat more foods with soluble fiber, a type of fiber that can help improve stool consistency and slow the passage of food in the intestine. These foods include oatmeal, oat bran, apple sauce, white rice, canned peaches or pears.
- Avoid foods high in insoluble fiber which can increase stool volume. These foods include whole grains and cereals, nuts and seeds, raw vegetables or fruit with skins. Peeling and seeding fruits and vegetables can reduce the amount of insoluble fiber.
- Avoid greasy, fatty and fried foods such as french fries, bacon, sausage, full-fat cheeses, potato chips, pastries, gravies and high fat sauces.
- Avoid spicy foods.

**If you have questions, contact CancerCare Manitoba Nutrition Services (204) 787-2109
or your nurse (204) 787-4461**

**If you have questions and are receiving your radiation treatments in Brandon, please contact the
Brandon nurse (204) 578-2224. A referral to a dietitian may be made.**
