

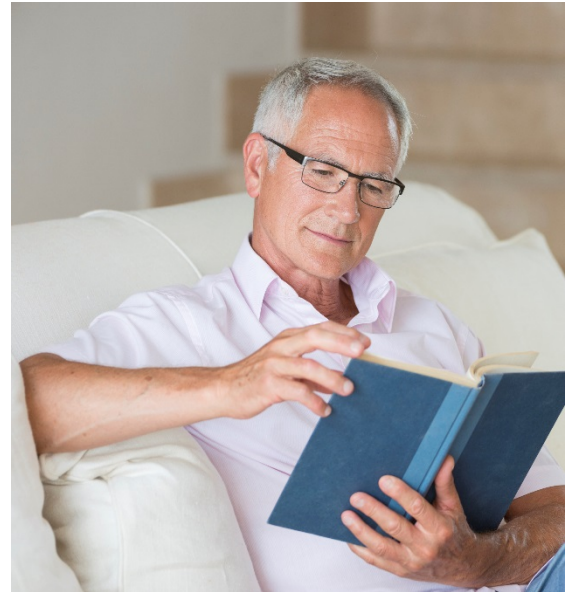
Urine Problems after Radiation

Radiation treatment can result in several kinds of problems with urination (peeing).

While most men will not have any of these problems, a small number of men will experience issues with urination either immediately after the completion of radiation, or in the months and years after treatment completion.

The most common urine problems after radiation treatment for prostate cancer include:

- The need to pass urine (pee) more often
- A feeling that you can't "hold it" and have to rush to the bathroom
- Leaking urine before you make it to the bathroom
- A hard time starting the stream
- Pus or blood in your urine



How does radiation treatment cause urine problems?

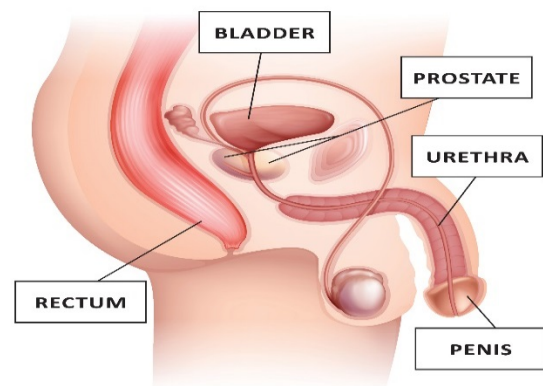
Radiation can damage cells.

While radiation kills cancer cells, it can affect the surrounding normal cells, including the bladder and the urethra (u REE thra). The bladder is a muscular organ that stores urine made by the kidneys and the urethra is the tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body through the penis. When either the bladder or the urethra are damaged by radiation, problems with passing urine can result.

Most men heal quickly.

Not all men develop problems, and those that do often have these problems go away within weeks of completing radiation treatment. Rarely, problems can occur or continue even months to years after completing radiation treatment. They

may continue to have a hard time passing urine, have a continued sensation that they need to pass urine, or may even notice blood in the urine. These may occur several years after completing radiation.



Urine Problems after Radiation

How can I manage urine problems after radiation treatment?

Often times symptoms can be managed without the need for medication. Some suggestions include avoiding food, drinks, and drugs that can irritate or bother your bladder including:

- *Spicy foods* – for example, foods with pepper or curry or hot chili
- *Tobacco* – cigarettes, pipe, and chewing tobacco. If you need help to quit tobacco, ask your healthcare team.
- *Alcohol and bubbly (carbonated) drinks*
- *Caffeine* – found in coffee, tea, colas, energy drinks, and hot chocolate. You may be able to drink small amounts without problems.

Lose extra weight.

Extra fat can push on your bladder and make you feel like you need to pass urine more often. If you need help losing weight, ask your healthcare team.

Take steps to avoid a bladder infection.

- *Pass urine often.* When you feel the need to go, listen to your bladder and go!
- *Drink lots of fluids.* Choose mostly water or clear liquids, about 8 to 10 glasses a day. This will dilute your urine and lower your chance for infection. It also helps flush out pus and blood and will help healing if you have an infection. If you have heart or kidney problems, ask your doctor or nurse how much you can drink.

Ask your doctor or nurse if there are medicines you could take for your urine problems.

- Pyridium may help you with pain and burning but should only be taken for a few days. This medication can cause your urine to temporarily change color but can be helpful especially when undergoing radiation treatment.
- Detrol or Ditropan may help with urinating too often and leaking.
- Hytrin, Cardura, and Flomax may make it easier for you to urinate, though these should be used carefully if you have issues with your heart or blood pressure. Discuss using these drugs with your healthcare provider.
- Proscar may decrease the blood in your urine if the blood is coming from the prostate. Sometimes bleeding comes from the bladder which would require other treatments if severe.

Try these tips:

- If you have a hard time starting to urinate, run the water in the sink or sit in a bathtub of warm water as you try to start the stream.
- If you leak urine, use pads in your underwear to absorb the urine.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about whether you should try Kegel exercises to strengthen the muscles that control urinating (see Kegel Exercises Program at the end of this guide).

Urine Problems after Radiation

When should I see or call my doctor or nurse?

- *If you have any signs of an infection:* urinating often, needing to urinate right away, pain or burning with urination, blood or pus in your urine, dull aching back pain, fever.
- *You are not able to urinate for 12 hours.*



Kegels Exercise Program

Check with your doctor before doing Kegels! If your doctor says OK, these exercises will help you strengthen the muscles that control urine flow. This means you may have much better control.

Find the right muscles to strengthen. They are between your scrotum (balls) and anus (opening for bowel movements). You'll know which ones they are by trying to stop your urine in midstream and counting to three. These are also the muscles you tighten when you don't want to pass gas. When you squeeze or tighten the muscles, think of it as pulling your muscles up and in. You don't want to be pushing out or bearing down.

Set up practice times. You can tighten and release these muscles without anyone knowing. So, you can do them while watching TV, reading,

driving, or any other time. Remember to exhale when you tighten your muscles.

A practice session lasts about 5 minutes. As you get better with Kegels, find 3 or 4 times during the day to practice.

Do both Long and Short Kegel exercises. See the directions below for how to include both Long and Short Kegel exercises. Start your session with Long Kegels. Build up to tightening your muscles for 10 seconds. When you can't hold your muscles tight for 10 seconds any longer, switch to Short Kegels.

Start slowly and build up. How strongly you tighten the muscles is more important than how many times you do it. Over time, you'll be able to tighten your muscles for a longer time and do more repetitions.

Kegels Exercise Program

Directions for Long Kegels (Start practice sessions with these.)

- *Tighten* the muscles between your scrotum and anus for 3-5 seconds. Then, *relax* the muscles for 3-5 seconds.
- Repeat this pattern 10 times.
- Your goal is to work up to tightening the muscles for 10 seconds, followed by relaxing for 10 seconds. It may take several weeks or longer to be able to do this.
- When you're tired, rest for 30 seconds, and then switch to short Kegels.

Directions for Short Kegels

Step 1: Tighten your muscles for 1 second and then relax them for 1 second.

Repeat this pattern 5 times.

Step 2: Rest for 10 seconds

Repeat steps 1 and 2 a total of 5 times.

You may want to keep track of your exercises on the Kegel log sheet on the next page.

Kegels Exercise Program / log sheet

Use this sheet to record one week of Kegels exercises. You should practice 3-4 times each day. There is space to record the number of

muscle squeezes you do, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon/evening. You may print the sheet as needed.

DATE	TIME	Long Kegels		Short Kegels	
		# squeezes held between 3 – 10 seconds		# sets of 5 one-second squeezes	
	AM				
	PM				
	AM				
	PM				
	AM				
	PM				
	AM				
	PM				
	AM				
	PM				
	AM				
	PM				

This information was developed under guidance of the Michigan Cancer Consortium Prostate Cancer Action Committee. Their efforts were supported in part by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cooperative Agreement 5NU58DP003921. The contents of the publication do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

This guide contains general information and is not meant to replace consultation with your doctor or nurse.

Revised September 2016

