









drinks that may irritate the bladder such as fizzy drinks, caffeine based drinks (tea, coffee and cola), and alcohol.

Some men find that they leak urine (urinary incontinence) after HDR brachytherapy. Some research suggests that this happens in five to 20 out of 100 men (five to 20 per cent). If you have previously had a transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) then you may be more likely to have problems with leaking urine.

Read our Tool Kit fact sheet on **Urinary problems and prostate cancer** for more information about how to manage urinary problems.

### Erection problems

HDR brachytherapy can damage the blood vessels and nerves that control erections, which may make it difficult for you to get and keep an erection (erectile dysfunction). This may gradually get worse over several years.

The risk of long-term erectile dysfunction (ED) after HDR brachytherapy varies from man to man. Some research shows that between 16 and 45 out of 100 men (16 to 45 per cent) have problems with erections after HDR brachytherapy.

Your risk will increase if you had any problems getting and keeping an erection before treatment or if you are having hormone therapy or external beam radiotherapy alongside brachytherapy.

You could ask your specialist team for the rates of ED after HDR brachytherapy in the men treated at your hospital. There are several treatments available to help improve erectile function. For more information about these treatments read our Tool Kit fact sheet, **Sex and prostate cancer**.

### Fertility

Brachytherapy may have less of an effect on fertility than other treatments for prostate cancer but we still need more research into this. You may have a 'dry orgasm' where you do not produce any semen. Or you may notice that you produce less fluid, but it is possible that you are still fertile.

Changes to your sperm during brachytherapy could affect any children you may conceive during this time but the risk of this happening is very low. You may wish to avoid fathering a child during treatment and for a while after having treatment, for example, by using a condom or other form of contraception. If you are planning to have children, you should seek further information from your GP or specialist team.

### Bowel problems

The risk of bowel problems, such as inflammation and bleeding in the back passage (proctitis), is low in men treated with HDR brachytherapy. However, you are more likely to have problems if you are also having external beam radiotherapy. Tell your specialist team if you have any symptoms as there are treatments available that can help.

### Where can I get support?

As well as getting medical help to treat your cancer, you may find that it helps to talk to family or friends about how you are feeling. Sharing concerns can make any decisions about your treatment easier to deal with. You could also speak to your specialist team or call our confidential Helpline on 0800 074 8383.

Partners and family also often worry about their loved one, and may find it helpful to talk to your specialist team.

Some people find that it helps to talk to other men who have had brachytherapy. There are prostate cancer support groups throughout the country. You can ask your specialist team for details, or you can find a list of support groups on our website at [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk).

We can also arrange for someone who has experience of prostate cancer to speak to you about making a treatment choice through our one-to-one support service. Please call the Helpline on 0800 074 8383 for more information. If you have access to the internet, you can sign up to The Prostate Cancer Charity message boards, where you can share your views and experiences with others affected by prostate cancer. Our website address is [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk).



## More information

### **The Prostate Cancer Charity**

This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. Call our Helpline on 0800 074 8383 or visit our website at [www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk) for more Tool Kit fact sheets, including an **A to Z of medical words**, which explains some of the words and phrases used in this sheet.

### **Bladder and Bowel Foundation**

[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)  
Continence nurse helpline 0845 345 0165  
SATRA Innovation Park, Rockingham Road,  
Kettering, Northants, NN16 9JH  
Provides information and support for all types of bladder and bowel problems.

### **Health Talk Online**

[www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)  
Watch, listen to, or read personal experiences of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

### **Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres**

[www.maggiescentres.org](http://www.maggiescentres.org)  
Provide information and support to anyone affected by cancer. Their website holds a list of centres across the UK and has an online support group.

### **Prostate Brachytherapy Advisory Group**

[www.prostatebrachytherapyinfo.net](http://www.prostatebrachytherapyinfo.net)  
This website is written by health professionals and provides information about brachytherapy treatment.

### **Sexual Advice Association**

[www.sda.uk.net](http://www.sda.uk.net)  
Helpline 020 7486 7262  
(Mon, Wed & Fri 9am - 5pm)  
Suite 301, Emblem House, London Bridge Hospital, 27 Tooley Street, London SE1 2PR  
Provides a helpline service for advice and information about erectile dysfunction.

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to make sure that its services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope that these will add to the medical advice you have already been given and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your doctor if you are worried about any medical issues.

The Prostate Cancer Charity funds research into the causes of, and treatments for, prostate cancer. We also provide support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. We rely on charitable donations to continue this work. If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 8222 7666.

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### Tell us what you think

We hope you have found this information useful. If you have any comments or suggestions about any of our publications, you can email [literature@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:literature@prostate-cancer.org.uk) or write to The Information Team at The Prostate Cancer Charity, 100 Cambridge Grove, London W6 0LE

References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available on our website.

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