Here are instructions for men who will receive External Beam Radiation Therapy to treat prostate cancer.

Radiation therapy can be external beam (when a machine outside your body aims radiation at the cancer) or internal (when radiation is put inside your body, in or near the cancer). Sometimes people get both forms of radiation therapy.

There are several steps that will need to be done before beginning the external beam radiation treatments. Many patients will have gold markers placed into their prostate to help with the accurate delivery of each radiation treatment. All patients will have a CT scan and treatment planning. These are described below.

Some Patients Need Gold Markers

Some patients will need to have gold markers placed. If so, the doctor will review the procedure, along with the risks and benefits, during the time of the consult. Here is an overview of this process. The markers are placed during a separate appointment. You will have this done in a procedure room. You will need to undress from the waist down and lie down on a table and place your feet up in the stirrups. The doctor begins by cleaning the skin, then numbing the whole area with lidocaine. A tube-like probe, about 1 inch around and 5 inches long, is covered with a gel-filled condom. The doctor gently inserts this probe into your rectum. The probe sends out sound waves, which makes a picture of your prostate on a video screen. The doctor can see the size and shape of your prostate. Your doctor will then insert a small needle to numb the area around your prostate. Then the doctor inserts the small gold
markers in your prostate to mark exactly where it is. You will then have another appointment to come back and get the “CT Simulation”.

CT Scan Simulation

After the markers are placed or if they are not required, an appointment will be scheduled for you to have a CT scan. This scan helps to plan your treatment. This scan may be called a simulation. This is done in the Radiation Therapy area.

During this part of treatment planning, marks are made on your skin to show where to target your treatment. The radiation therapist will put small marks (using a sharpie marker) on your skin to mark the treatment area. You will need to keep these marks throughout the course of radiation therapy.

Here is how you will need to prepare for this CT scan.

Steps to prepare for the CT scan:

1. Please try to empty your bowels before this CT scan. If you often have large amounts of bowel gas or constipation, please use a fleet’s enema on the morning of your appointment or a mild laxative the evening before.

2. 1 to 2 hours before your scheduled CT scan, please urinate enough to empty your bladder. Then drink two 8 ounce glasses of water. You may drink more if you can tolerate it. The goal is to have your bladder full, but not so full that you cannot rest comfortably on the x-ray table. **Do not urinate again until after the CT.**

3. Eat as you would normally. You will not need to fast before this CT. No contrast dye is used for this planning CT.

Beginning the Radiation Treatments

After the planning CT and the skin marking, the radiation therapist may talk to you then, or will call you later, about the date to begin your treatments. It usually takes about 1 to 2 weeks for the treatment planning to be completed and then you will start your daily radiation treatments.

You can expect to have a treatment each weekday, Monday through Friday (not on weekends or holidays) for several weeks. Your schedule will depend on what is ordered by your doctor for your treatment.
Preventing for Each Radiation Treatment

You will need to prepare for each of your daily treatments a little bit like how you prepared for the CT scan:

- 1 to 2 hours before your radiation treatment time, urinate enough to empty your bladder. Then drink two 8 ounce glasses of water. You can drink more if you can tolerate it. The goal is to have your bladder full, but not so full that you cannot rest comfortably on the x-ray table. Do not urinate again until after your treatment.

Most people are able to come for these treatments by themselves. You will not have to limit contact with your loved ones after this treatment. If you will need to plan for local lodging, transportation or have other needs, please tell your doctor or nurse. They can ask a social worker to help with local resources. The James has support groups available where you or your partner can meet with others in similar situations.

Please feel free to ask questions at any time of your Radiation oncology doctor or nurse. You may call the Radiation Oncology area at The James at: 614-293-8415.