

Radiation to the Skin

What you need to know

As it works to rid your body of cancer cells, radiation therapy can cause side effects to the skin in the treated area. Most side effects begin after two or three weeks of treatment. Report any side effects you experience to your radiation oncology team. This card provides information about how to minimize and treat side effects.

Skin reaction

Skin reaction is an expected side effect of radiation to the skin. Initially, this reaction may appear as pinkness or tanning of the skin, which may progress to red, hot or open moist peeling areas of skin. The skin may feel dry or itchy. You may notice an itchy, bumpy rash in the treated area.

Here's how to care for your skin in the treated area:

- Use non-deodorant, non-perfumed soap such as unscented Dove or Basis. Gently cleanse (don't scrub) the treatment area and pat dry. Don't rub the markings on your skin.
- You will be instructed on a cream to use in the treated area. Don't use other creams or oils in that area. Don't apply anything to your skin within four hours before your treatment.
- If your skin is uncomfortable, please let us know.
- If you must shave the treated area, use an electric razor, not a blade razor.
- Don't apply heat or ice packs/pads directly to skin in the treated area.
- Wear soft, cotton clothing in the treated area. Avoid exposed elastic or constricting clothing.
- Don't expose your skin in the treatment area to sun. Wear clothing that covers the treated area. You'll be sensitive to sunburn in the treated area so wear clothing that covers it. After you've completed your treatment and your skin has healed, you may expose it to sun, but use a sunblock of SPF 30 or higher and reapply it frequently.

Nutrition

Good nutrition is important. Try to eat three balanced meals each day. Don't try to diet or lose weight during treatment and don't skip meals. If you lose weight, a nurse will discuss your diet with you. If you need guidance about what makes a balanced meal, please discuss this with a nurse.

You may take a multivitamin but do not take vitamin E or vitamin C tablets.

Important Note: While you're undergoing radiation therapy, pregnancy is not advised. If you're not sure if you're pregnant or think you might be, please report this to your radiation therapy physician immediately.

Questions? Ask Us.

Remember: Report any side effects to the Radiation Oncology staff.

If you have concerns or questions, please ask them during your treatment appointment. If you need to speak with someone urgently, please call:

- Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Radiation Oncology Center at 314-251-6844
- After hours, to reach a physician call 314-663-3011



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