

Radiation to the Bone

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 bone. 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.
- If your skin is uncomfortable, please let us know and we'll give you something to apply to your skin.
- 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.
- You'll be sensitive to sunburn in the treated area, so wear clothing that covers it and don't expose that skin to the sun. 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. Your skin may be sensitive to sunburn in the treated area for up to a year after radiation is completed.

Limitations

- You may be asked to limit activity related to the area being treated.
- Don't apply excessive strain or weight to the affected bony area.

Fatigue

During the last few weeks of your treatment, you may experience some generalized fatigue. You may need additional rest. Try these strategies to fight fatigue:

- Balance activity with rest. If you feel tired, take a brief nap, if possible, or put your feet up briefly, then resume your activity.

- Drink six to eight, eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated beverages each day.
- Stay active. Walking is a non-stressful activity that may help fatigue.

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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