Radiation therapy to skin

Information for patients, carers and their families

What is radiation therapy?

Radiation is a precise and localised treatment. Any related side effects will only occur within the area being treated. Each person is very much an individual so not everyone will experience the same side effects even if you are receiving similar treatments.

You will receive regular treatment reviews from your Radiation Oncologist and weekly reviews by your Nurse. If you are concerned about any aspect of your treatment, and or new problems arise between these review times please notify your Radiation Therapists and they will assist you.

Possible side effects

- Skin damage.
- Tiredness or fatigue.
- Hair loss in the treatment area.

General advice to follow during your radiation treatment

- Shower daily, using a warm gentle flow.
- Only use a mild soap (e.g. Dove® Sensitive). Aqueous cream (e.g. Sorbolene® or MooGoo® Skin Milk Udder Cream) can also be used in the shower as an alternative to soap. Pat the skin dry after your shower, do not rub the skin.
- Apply aqueous cream to the skin twice a day, morning and night. Avoid applying just before treatment.
- You may require a dressing to the area being treated. Your nurse will advise you what to put on your skin.
- Areas of your skin that react during radiation treatment will always be more sensitive and at risk of sun damage even when your treatment has finished. You will always need to protect them from the sun.
  - Wear a hat
  - Wear loose fitting, cotton clothing
  - Use sunscreen with a high protection factor (but do not use this on the treatment site during treatment)
  - Try to stay in the shade
- Maintain a well-balanced diet. Good nutrition is very important for healing of the ‘good’ cells in your body.
  - Drink eight (8) cups of water a day.
  - Feeling tired during treatment is normal. It is beneficial to keep up normal daily exercise and engage in moderate exercise e.g. walking. Cut work hours back if excessive tiredness occurs and have a nap as required.

Smoking

You are strongly advised not to smoke. Smoking during and after treatment will reduce the chance of treatment being successful.

It will also make the reaction to radiotherapy worse and significantly increase the risk of late side effects.

Please ask for advice from any member of the team if you would like help to quit.

Further information

For further up to date evidence-based information, please refer to www.eviq.org.au

Nursing staff can be contacted 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday by phoning 5202 1111.