Radiation therapy to breast or chest wall
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
- Dry or irritated skin in the treatment area:
  - There is usually very little reaction for the first 10 to 14 days of your treatment. After this period the skin may become red, itchy or dry depending on your skin type. Skin which has had previous sun exposure and tanning can have more reaction
  - Your nurse will review your skin regularly and give advice on any change to skincare. Dressings will be applied by nursing staff if required. Please be guided by the treatment team before applying anything to the treatment area
  - No adhesive tapes can be applied to the treatment area as the skin becomes fragile and will break when tape is removed.

- Tiredness or fatigue.
- Hair loss in the treatment area.
- Aches and pains in your breast.

General advice to follow during your radiation treatment
- Shower daily, using a warm gentle flow.
- Only use a mild soap (e.g. Dove® Sensitive). Pat the skin dry after your shower, do not rub the skin.
- Apply aqueous cream (e.g. Sorbolene® or MooGoo® Skin Milk Udder Cream) to the skin at night to prevent skin dryness and reduce irritation. Avoid applying just before treatment.
- 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 as good nutrition is very important for healing the ‘good’ cells in your body.
  - 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.