Medical Services - Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy to stomach/abdomen

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

- Nausea and vomiting is common because treatment to your stomach can make you feel sick and may begin after your first treatment. If this occurs, your doctor will prescribe medication to prevent this.
- Dry or irritated skin in the treatment area.
- Tiredness or fatigue.
- Heartburn, pain on swallowing if the oesophagus is within the treatment area.
  - 20mL of Gaviscon® or Mylanta® can relieve heartburn.
- Change in bowel habits i.e. frequent loose stool or constipation. Talk to your Nurse about modifying your diet, or for the recommendation of medications that will assist in managing these symptoms such as Imodium or Lomotil®.
- 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.
- 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
- 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
- Please inform the radiation therapists or the nursing staff if you are experiencing increased shortness of breath or excessive coughing.
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.