

When you return to begin your treatments, you will meet the radiation therapists who deliver your daily treatments. Treatments are scheduled Monday through Friday. The exact number of treatments will be determined by your physician and is designed to best meet your specific treatment needs.

Radiation therapy is closed for certain holidays, and you will be notified if a holiday occurs during your course of treatment. Due to the number of patients under treatment and emergency hospital patients, there can be delays in the time of your daily treatment. We appreciate your patience.

Side Effects

Radiation treatment to the skin will always result in some degree of skin reaction. Other effects are variable, depending on the site of skin receiving radiation. At your initial consultation, your radiation physician reviewed the anticipated results and side effects of the radiation plan for you in great detail.

It is important to give special attention to the skin in the treatment area. Skin reactions can range from mild to severe. Skin reactions usually do not occur until you have received several weeks of treatment. The skin changes usually occur gradually, and the intensity of the reaction depends on your skin sensitivity, the amount and kind of radiation being used, and whether you have received or are receiving chemotherapy.

There are various types of radiation skin reactions, which may include:

- Pink or reddened tender skin feeling similar to a sunburn.
- Mild swelling (which may continue long after treatment).
- Itchy skin with or without a “goosebump” appearance.
- Dry flaking skin.
- Moist, blistered skin.

Our clinical staff will evaluate the skin in your treatment area periodically to look for signs of skin reaction. Because of these various types of skin reactions, different methods of skin care will be suggested that will not interfere with your radiation treatment. These suggestions may not stop or reverse the reaction but may soothe the skin and make it more comfortable while you are under treatment. They also prevent infection and speed up the healing process when your treatment is complete. Check with our clinical staff before using anything on your skin in the treatment area. Notify our clinical staff of any skin changes.

Radiation also affects the hair follicles, blood vessels, and moisturizing glands in the treated skin. The degree of skin reaction is influenced by a number of factors:

- Reactions are worse in skin folds.
- Skin reactions are increased with prior or concurrent use of chemotherapy agents.
- Acute skin reactions generally begin 2 to 3 weeks after the initiation of radiation.
- Skin reactions generally resolve within approximately 2 to 4 weeks after completion of treatment.
- Late effects in the skin can include atrophy, pigment changes, thinning, and changes in the appearance of superficial blood vessels.
- Your skin may become quite firm in the treatment area, especially if you have had prior surgery to that area.

General Skin Care Guidelines for the treated area of the skin only:

Do These

- Keep the skin dry and clean.
- Wash gently with mild soap, such as Basis or Aveeno colloidal soap and rinse. Lotion soaps are OK.
- Use your hand only for washing the area.
- Wash with warm or cool water.
- Wear soft, loose-fitting clothes over the treated area to avoid friction.
- Wear natural fibers, such as cotton or silk, that allow the skin to breathe.
- Protect treated area from direct sunlight.
- May use 100% aloe vera gel as desired for comfort.
- May use cornstarch in skin fold areas to decrease friction/moisture as long as skin is intact.
- Keep tub bath time to minimum – no soaking.
- Use 1% hydrocortisone cream without aloe vera for itching skin 3-4 times a day in area that itches only. Use instead of aloe in those areas.
- Keep fingernails trimmed to prevent skin damage from scratching.
- Notify clinical staff for questions or problems.

Do Not Do These

- Remove lines or ink marks that have been placed on your skin unless instructed.
- Use alcohol, creams, lotions, perfumes, or powders on treated skin.
- Apply tape or Band-Aids.
- Shave treated region with straight razor for up to 1 month after treatment is completed.
- Use aftershaves or preshaves over treatment area.
- Expose skin to extreme temperatures when bathing or in the environment.
- Use any powder on raw areas, rashes, or open sores.
- Use heating pads or hot water bottles.
- Rub or massage the area.
- Use washcloths or abrasive material for cleansing.

After-Treatment Care

- Do not expose treated area to direct sunlight.
- Use SPF-30 or higher sunscreen that blocks UVA and UVB.
- You may find that you have chronically dry skin in the treatment region. If this is noted, we recommend regular use of a moisturizing agent, such as Aquaphor or Eucerin cream.

While Receiving Radiation

You will have scheduled visits with our clinical staff at least one time per week during treatment. We will be assessing your progress and making recommendations to you

on changes in your care program as needed. Our clinical staff will be available at any time if you have questions or concerns that need to be addressed between these scheduled weekly visits.