

Care of Radiation Therapy Side Effects: Skin Care

If you are having external radiation therapy a skin reaction in the treated area is possible, talk to your treatment team about whether this might happen to you. A skin reaction is more common for some areas like the breast or head and neck. The skin in the treated area may become warm, dry or itchy. It may change colour (become pink, red, darker or tanned looking). Hair loss can happen in the treated area.

Most skin reactions begin within the first week or so of starting treatment, but timing can vary. They usually go away a few weeks after your last treatment, but some skin changes, like skin darkening or scarring, can be permanent.

To help your skin feel better, try the following:

- Be very gentle with the skin in the treated area.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- When you bathe or shower use warm water (not hot) and afterwards pat the skin dry with a soft towel.
- If your head or scalp is being treated be gentle when washing your hair (use your normal shampoo).
- Keeping your skin moisturized is recommended. There's no evidence that any cream or product is better for this. If you like a certain product or brand, please continue to use it.
- If you are looking for a moisturizer you might want to pick one that is water-based (i.e. the first ingredient on the list) or your treatment team can help if you need a recommendation.
- Once you start your treatment use the moisturizer as frequently as possible.
- Deodorants and antiperspirants may be used.
- If you want to shave, an electric razor is best.
- Avoid putting perfume, alcohol, astringents, and adhesives on the treated skin.
- Protect the treated skin from direct sunlight and wind.

- Avoid extremes of hot or cold (heating pads, ice packs, saunas, etc).
- It is OK to swim as long as your skin is intact. After swimming, remove wet swimwear and gently wash the skin. Gently dry the area and apply moisturizer. Do not swim if your skin becomes irritated or if your skin breaks down.
- Do not use hot tubs or Jacuzzis®.

***PLEASE DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE TO YOUR
ONCOLOGY CARE TEAM***