

You will be receiving radiation therapy to relieve or reduce pain. Listed below are some of the side effects you may experience. Measures that you can take to minimize these side effects are also listed.

Palliative Radiation Therapy

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS RECEIVING PALLIATIVE RADIATION THERAPY



Pain Control: Pain medication reduces pain to a tolerable level. The best way to take pain medication is on a regular schedule. Taking pain medication on a regular schedule helps you manage your pain and reduces pain flare-ups from occurring. Do not wait until your pain is severe to take your medication. If your medication is in a patch, do not apply the patch to the area that is receiving radiation. It may take several weeks for the radiation to help your pain, so please continue to take your pain medications until you notice an improvement in pain.



Fatigue: Loss of energy is a common side effect of radiation therapy. Endurance, stamina, concentration, and motivation may all decrease as a result of fatigue. Conserve your energy and rest when you need to. Eat a well-balanced diet and stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Exercise such as walking or yoga can improve your energy. Respect your body's limitations—if you hurt while exercising, stop.



Skin Care: It is okay to bathe or shower daily with a mild soap. Wash the treatment area gently. Do not scrub the skin. If you have ink marks on your skin, please do not wash them off. Gently pat the skin dry.

During the course of your radiation therapy treatments, we ask that you put nothing on the skin in the treatment area except for the products recommended by the physician or nurse. Use moisturizers for dryness and over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream for itchiness. Apply products twice daily or as needed. We do not want the skin “greasy” when you come in for treatment. Underarm deodorant may be used.

Avoid the use of hot or cold in the treatment area. This includes the use of heating pads, hot packs, hot water bottles, ice packs, and ice bags. It is okay to use an electric blanket. Avoid the use of tape or Band-Aids in the treatment area.



Sun Exposure: During treatment, avoid exposing the skin in the treatment area to direct sunlight or tanning beds. If you plan on being in the sun for an extended period, cover the skin with clothing or broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. The treatment area will *a/ways* be more sensitive to the sun and tanning beds.



Dry Mouth: Pain medications often cause a decrease in the amount of saliva in your mouth. For comfort, we suggest that you drink plenty of water and other liquids, sucking on ice chips or sugarless candy.



Nutrition: During your course of therapy, it is very important to maintain your weight. We suggest a diet high in protein and healthy fats. Your nurse will be checking your weight frequently. We can suggest food supplements if weight loss occurs. It is not unusual to notice a decrease in appetite during radiation therapy. You will need to make a conscious effort to maintain adequate calorie intake. Frequent, small meals (every 2-3 hours) may be tolerated better than three large meals a day.



Duration: Side effects may worsen the final week of treatment and the week after radiation treatments are completed. Most of these side effects gradually subside within 4-8 weeks after treatment. Please call our office if you have any questions at any time during or after your radiation treatments.
