

To get to the tumor, the beam of radiation must pass through some area of normal tissue, generating side effects in those areas. The amount of radiation that any one area of the body can tolerate varies. Approximately two weeks after your first treatment, you may experience some mild side effects (described below). Your doctor will discuss the side effects depending on the dose of radiation and the site being treated.

It is very important that you notify your doctor or nurse as soon as you experience any side effects. They can be much better managed if they are treated at the earliest onset.

If you are receiving chemotherapy and radiation therapy simultaneously, side effects may be enhanced or may start earlier than two weeks into treatment.

Skin

Skin exposed to radiation may become dry and itchy. You may also experience some peeling at the end of treatment. As with a sunburn or tanning, your skin may darken during treatment, but this should fade over time and your skin will return to a normal color following the end of treatment. All symptoms will subside within a few weeks after completing therapy.

Recommendations

- Keep the treated area clean and avoid using anything topical (applied to the skin) unless your doctor recommends it.
- Use mild soaps like Dove® or Ivory®.
- Your doctor will recommend special topical creams that help protect your skin. It is important to apply these creams when you start treatment. This will help minimize skin irritation. Remember, use only lotions or creams that are recommended by your physician.
- Commonly recommended topical creams:
 - Hydrocortisone cream (three times a day)
 - Pure aloe vera gel
- Always advise your physician of any skin irritations.

Fatigue

Some patients may experience fatigue during radiation therapy treatment. The fatigue may begin within two weeks after the start of your therapy. At two weeks post treatment, most people feel 80 percent normal and at six weeks, the fatigue is usually resolved. In general, with radiation treatment-induced fatigue, if you rest it will get better.

Recommendations

- Adjust your daily schedule to minimize fatigue and allow yourself to take naps and rest as needed.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Avoid weight loss.
- Drink plenty of liquids.
- Low-level exercise may be helpful in increasing your energy level.

Post-treatment note

When your course of radiation therapy is complete, you will be scheduled for follow-up visits with your radiation oncologist. Follow-up appointments will be scheduled regularly while side effects are present. Our team will manage any resultant side effects until they have disappeared entirely.