

Skin Care During Radiation Therapy

During radiation therapy, you may notice some skin changes in the area being treated. Your skin may:

- Slowly redden or tan
- Become dry and peel

If you notice any skin changes, talk with your doctor or nurse.

The following steps can help ease any discomfort and protect the skin from further irritation. During therapy:

- Clean the area with unscented bath soap made for sensitive skin. Some suggested soaps are: Basis for Sensitive Skin®, Dove for Sensitive Skin® or Neutrogena Unscented®. Avoid using soaps that are scented or antibacterial.
- Use lukewarm water on the area. Hot water can further irritate the skin.
- When drying your skin, gently pat dry, do not rub the area.
- Do not shave the skin in the area being treated.
- Extreme temperatures can damage the skin being treated. Please do not use heating pads or ice packs on that area.

Your doctor or nurse may also suggest a special moisturizing cream, such as Miaderm® or Aquaphor®. **Do not put any cream on your skin within 2 hours of your treatment, as your skin will be more sensitive to the effects of radiation.** You may apply a moisturizing cream to the affected area 2 to 3 times per day.

If ink pen marks and tape are used to identify the treatment areas, use extra care when washing. Do not remove the tape or the marks. If the marks start to fade, please tell your therapist. Do not redraw them yourself. If you are allergic to tape, tell your therapist or nurse.

When choosing clothes, certain fabrics like wool might irritate your skin. Cotton and other soft knit fabrics are recommended. Wear washable clothes over any pen markings.

Swelling in the treated area can occur. To control swelling:

- Avoid sleeping on the same side as the treatment area.
- Reduce your salt intake.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Radiation Oncology