

Skin Care for Head and Neck Radiation

External beam radiation therapy is being used to treat your head and neck cancer. When radiation is given, it passes through your skin. Skin problems are common and radiation may cause skin changes to the treated area. Most often, skin changes start during week 2 or 3 of your treatment. Your skin may become sensitive, irritated and red or darker in color.

How to Take Care of Your Skin

It is important to take special care of your skin before, during and after radiation therapy.

Things you should do:

- Wash your skin each day with mild soap and warm water and pat dry. **Do not** rub or scrub your skin. Use mild, fragrance-free soap, such as Dove, Ivory, Neutrogena, Basis or Castile.
- If needed, you may use an electric razor with a guard to trim your facial hair. **Do not** use blade razors.
- Use creams or lotions that are free of perfumes and dyes, such as Remedy, Eucerin or Aquaphor, at least 2 times each day or when your skin feels dry.
 - ▶ You may use a **thin** layer of cream or lotion on the treated area before your radiation therapy. **Do not** put on a thick layer of cream or lotion. You may continue to use a thin layer up until you arrive at your radiation appointment.
- Stay away from extreme cold and heat, such as hot water and ice packs.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more information about radiation therapy and side effects, ask for the following patient education handouts:

- Radiation Therapy for Head and Neck Cancer
- Short-Term Side Effects from Head and Neck Radiation
- Long-Term Side Effects from Head and Neck Radiation
- Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects – Radiation Therapy Skin Care