

Radiation Treatment Information for Breast Cancer

This information will help prepare you and your caregiver for your treatment.

What to Expect

You will receive external beam radiation therapy, a noninvasive treatment.

What to Expect

Some people will develop side effects that usually occur within 1-3 weeks following the start of radiation therapy. You may experience some or all of the symptoms below, but they are usually temporary and will subside a few weeks after treatment is complete.

- Some patients may experience mild to moderate fatigue.
- Some patients report occasional warm sensations, tingling, or sharp pains in the breast. These sensations decrease slowly over time.
- Temporary skin changes might occur, including redness, dryness, peeling, and itching of the treated area. Darkening of the skin in the treated area can also occur. The timing of the peak skin reaction varies, so please discuss with your physician. Healing often takes 3-4 weeks.

Please discuss problems or concerns about side effects or any part of your treatment with your doctor, nurse, or therapist.

Care

Bathe and shower daily using warm water and a mild unscented soap such as Dove or Purpose.

- **Do not** use a washcloth, scrubbing cloth, or brush on the treatment area when bathing.

- Pat skin dry with a soft towel or allow to air-dry.
- Apply unscented moisturizers, such as Aquaphor or Aloe vera (90 to 100 percent Aloe vera), to the treated area 2-3 times a day. **Do not** use moisturizers within 4 hours before your radiation treatment.

Do not shave your underarm while under treatment. Applying deodorant to the underarm adjacent to the treated area might cause irritation. We **do not recommend** using deodorant up to 4 hours before treatment; if deodorant is worn, clean underarm with a wet paper towel prior to treatment.

Daily use of deodorant **after** your treatment is acceptable. To minimize skin irritation, wear loose-fitting cotton underwear and clothing.

Since the area being treated has the potential for increased sensitivity than the rest of your skin, always protect the area from sun exposure after your treatment ends and skin is healed. Use PABA-free sunscreen with a SPF of at least 30.

A daily multi-vitamin is OK during your treatment. **Do not** take other vitamins or any supplements, including both nutritional and herbal supplements, without talking to your doctor.

Swimming is **not** permitted.

Caution

- Heating pads and/or very hot water can cause skin pain or skin irritation to the treatment area.
- Hot tubs or saunas are not encouraged while receiving radiation treatment.
- Underwire bras can irritate the skin and/or cause pain.
- Do not use products with alcohol, including alcohol pads, on your skin in the area being treated.
- Do not use makeup, perfumes, or powders in the area being treated.
- Birth control is recommended during treatment, because radiation therapy may pose risks to an unborn child.

Contact your nurse and doctor if you experience:

- Red and/or tender skin
- Pain
- Nipple tenderness
- Dry and/or itchy skin
- Discomfort in the treated area
- Swelling of the breast, underarm, or arm
- Rash

Call immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever and chills
- 100.5°F or above

Contact Us

During office hours, call your radiation oncologist. After-hours, call 214-645-8525.