

Radiation Treatment Information for Patients with Gynecological Cancers

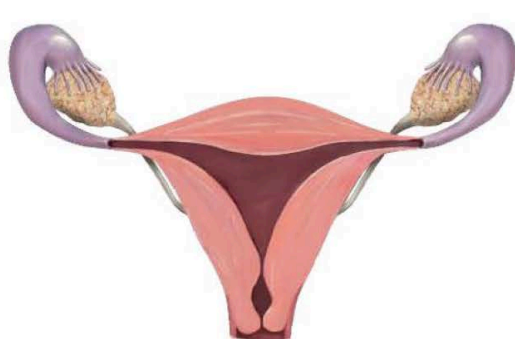
This information will help prepare you and your caregiver for your treatment.

What to Expect

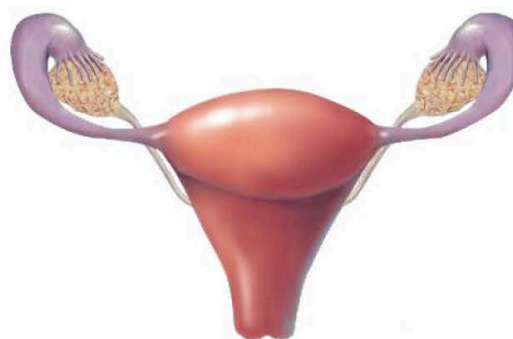
If you have cancer of the cervix or uterus, you may need to receive radiation treatment. Radiation, an invisible ray or beam of energy, can kill the cancerous growth. Radiation can be given in two ways – externally or internally.

External radiation means your body receives radiation from a special radiation machine. While you are lying on a table, the radiation machine aims the radiation to the part of your body to be treated. External radiation treatments might take several weeks, 5 days a week – often done on an outpatient basis. The actual treatments, which are painless, are similar to x-rays you've done in the past.

Internal radiation (implant radiation) means that a radioactive substance is placed temporarily inside your body. Radioactive materials give off radiation in a small area. Implant radiation may be in the form of conduits, seeds, or wires. Conduits, inside a holder, are most commonly used. The implant may be placed in the area of your cancer before or after your external radiation treatment.



Uterus (internal)



Uterus (external)

Side Effects

Side effects may occur 1-3 weeks following the start of radiation therapy. These may include:

- Fatigue, which is very common during treatment.
- Difficulty urinating or urinating more often than usual which might occur about 4 weeks into your treatment.
- Diarrhea

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

Care

- Shower with unscented soaps
- Unscented baby wipes may be less irritating than toilet tissue
- A sitz bath or sitting in a tub of warm water can be soothing
- Keep the treated area clean and dry. Wash gently after each bowel movement with moisturized, unscented alcohol-free wipes
- **DO NOT** use moisturizers within 4 hours before your radiation treatment
- Tight clothing, pantyhose, or girdles may irritate your skin
- Loose-fitting cotton underwear is recommended
- Drink six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily throughout your radiation therapy, unless you have fluid restrictions
- Eating small frequent meals instead of three large meals a day may limit stomach upset

**Dietary advice is specific to pelvic radiation therapy.*

Caution

- Avoid very hot or cold food and drinks

- Avoid using saunas and hot tubs while undergoing treatment
- Alcoholic beverages and caffeine may increase difficulty urinating or frequency
- Loose, frequent bowel movements may occur 2-3 weeks into treatment. Ask your doctor or nurse to suggest medications or products you can use to help relieve the discomfort of your rectal area. Your doctor may prescribe medications that decrease the frequency of bowel movements.

Contact Your Nurse and Doctor if You Experience:

- Redness and/or tenderness of the skin
- Loose bowel movements
- Discomfort with urination
- Vaginal discharge, pain, irritation, and/or bleeding
- Fatigue not relieved with rest
- Difficulty with intercourse

Call Immediately if You Have Any of the Following Symptoms:

- More than 5 loose, watery stools in a 24-hour period
- Unusual bleeding
- Temperature of 100.5°F or above
- Chills

Contact Us

For any concerns, call your radiation oncologist at 214-645-8525.