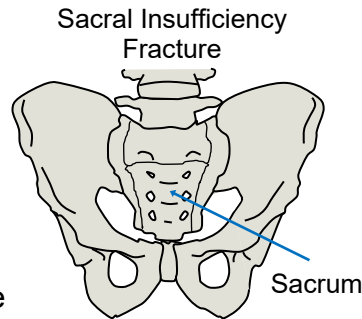


**5. Risk of fractures**

Radiation may weaken the bones in your pelvis. This may cause sacral insufficiency fractures, where the wedge-shaped bone in the pelvis called the sacrum breaks.

If this happens, you may have severe pain in the back, hip, buttock and pelvic areas. You may have trouble walking.



**If you have symptoms of a fracture, go to your nearest emergency department AND call the Symptom Support Telephone Service to report the fracture.**

If you are having side effects related to your cancer treatment, please contact:

**Symptom Support Telephone Service**

 **During the day:  
Cancer Centre Symptom Support  
705-728-9090 x79565**

 **Evenings, weekends and holidays:  
Bayshore CAREchart 1-877-681-3057**

To cancel or change your appointment, please call 705-728-9090 x43333. Please visit [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca) for the latest information and hours of operation.

**Finished Treatment  
Instructions (Gyn)**

*For Female Patients Undergoing Radiation Therapy to their Pelvic Area*

**What's next?**

Your Radiation Oncologist will discuss your follow-up plan with you during your last weekly review appointment. In the weeks after your last treatment, you may find this to be an emotionally difficult time. Some people are very excited to be finished, but others find it difficult for many reasons.

**If you have any concerns about how you are feeling:** Call the Symptom Support Telephone Service (see the back of this pamphlet for details). Make an appointment to see a social worker (call 705-728-9090 x43520 for an appointment).

**Will I have side effects after my treatment is finished?**

- Radiation continues to work, even after your treatments are finished.
- Most side effects of your radiation treatment will continue for 2 to 4 weeks after your last treatment.
- Some side effects actually peak after your treatments are finished, getting worse before they get better.
- Please refer to your *Radiation Therapy Symptom Management Guide* that was given to you before the start of your radiation treatments. It outlines more specific side effects to your case and how to manage them.

## Long-Term Side Effects

Some side effects from radiation therapy may continue or begin after treatment ends. These long-term side effects may happen for months or years after treatment.

Bowel obstruction, radiation proctitis and fractures happen very rarely. There is no way to avoid them; just be watchful of the signs and symptoms and get medical help if they happen.

### 1. Vaginal shortening & narrowing (atrophy)

Radiation therapy may cause your vagina to shorten or narrow, making pelvic exams and sexual intercourse painful. Try using a vaginal dilator to gently stretch the vagina and vaginal lubricants (e.g. K-Y<sup>®</sup> JELLY) to help with dryness or discomfort. When selecting a vaginal dilator, try starting with a smaller size and progress to whatever size is comfortable.

#### How to use a vaginal dilator:

- Start using the dilator 2-4 weeks after your last radiation treatment.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and legs apart
- Place some water-based vaginal lubricant on the dilator
- Insert the dilator into your vagina, pointing it towards the small of your back. Gently push it in and only insert as far as it is comfortable.
- Close your legs slowly and straighten your legs
- Leave dilator in place for 3 minutes
- Slowly remove the dilator. There may be a small amount of blood on the dilator. This is normal.
- Wash the dilator with soap and water. Let it air dry and store it in a clean place.



Use the dilator 3 times a week for the first 4-6 months. If you are having sexual intercourse you don't need to use the dilator as often. The goal is to have intercourse and/or use the dilator 3 times a week to prevent the narrowing/shortening of the vagina. Not sure where to purchase a vaginal dilator? Try PureHealth Pharmacy (inside RVH, (705) 797-3070). You can also ask your Care Team or a social worker for more information.

### 2. Pain during sexual intercourse (dyspareunia)

Sexual intercourse might be uncomfortable or painful because of the effects of radiation. Water-based vaginal lubricants (e.g. K-Y<sup>®</sup> JELLY) and moisturizers (e.g. Replens<sup>®</sup>) may help. Our Sexual Health, Intimacy and Cancer (SHIC) Clinic can also help with your sexual health and emotional concerns. Call 705-728-9090 x43520 for an appointment.



### 3. Bowel obstruction (blockage)

**If you feel severe constant pain in the bowel area, have a swollen abdomen, and can't pass bowel movements or gas, your bowel may be obstructed (blocked). Go to your nearest emergency department immediately AND also call the Symptom Support Telephone Service (see back of pamphlet for details).**



### 4. Radiation proctitis

Damage to the lower parts of the colon (large intestine) may occur after radiation, causing bleeding and inflammation. You may see blood in your stool, on the toilet paper, or in the toilet bowl. If this happens, see your family doctor and also tell your Radiation Primary Nurse.