

# Managing Side Effects of Skin Radiation Therapy

## ***Radiation Side Effects***

Side effects caused by radiation therapy to the skin may vary from person to person. These side effects may be affected by other treatments, such as surgery, chemotherapy, and medications. In this booklet, we have listed some of the more common side effects and helpful tips to manage them. You may experience other side effects related to your radiation treatment that are not discussed in this pamphlet. For more information, please speak to a member of your Care Team.

## ***What is a Skin Reaction?***

The skin in the treatment area reacts over time to radiation and most patients do not notice any changes until about the second week of treatment. At that time your skin may look slightly pink and change to a darker pink or brown as the treatments continue. Along with the changing colour of the skin, you may also notice the skin start to feel dry, itchy, sensitive, warm and/or tender. The skin reaction will be at its peak at about 14 -20 days after all your treatments are complete.

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## ***How to Take Care of Your Skin During Treatment***

### **Washing**

- Use lukewarm water.
- Use a mild, unscented soap for sensitive skin.
- Avoid rubbing or scrubbing the area.
- Use your hand to gently wash the area.
- Pat dry with a soft towel.

### **Moisturizing**

- Apply Lubriderm® (unscented, lanolin free) or Glaxal Base® Moisturizing Cream to the treatment area at least twice a day. Make sure the cream is absorbed prior to treatment. Stop using the cream if skin begins to peel and is moist-looking.



- If your anal/rectal/vulvar region is being treated with radiation, do not apply any creams in that area (unless advised by your Care Team).
- Please ask your Care Team about a saline compress or sitz bath if your skin is irritated.
- Do not use any other creams or lotions in the area that is being treated (unless advised by your Care Team).

### **Clothing**

- Wear loose fitting clothing in the affected area.

## Things to avoid:

- Extreme hot or cold temperatures on the skin in the treatment area (i.e. ice packs and heating pads).
- Shaving and waxing within treatment area – use an electric razor if necessary.
- Tight or ill-fitting clothes that rub against your skin.
- Adhesive tapes or dressings in the treatment area.
- Hot tubs, saunas and chlorinated pools.
- Swimming in lakes.
- All perfumes, lotions, creams, sprays, colognes etc. in the treatment area - except Lubriderm® (unscented, lanolin free) or Glaxal Base® cream.



## Sun Safety

- Keep the treatment area out of natural or artificial sunlight during treatment and for 2-4 weeks after treatment is complete.
- Protect the treatment area from the sun by covering the area with clothing (i.e. shirts with high collars), wearing a wide brim hat or staying in the shade.



More on next page...

## Sun Safety (continued...):

- Do not use sunscreen in the treatment area until the skin is completely healed.



After treatment is complete and your skin is completely healed, your skin in the treatment area will always be more sensitive to sunlight. You will need to protect your skin with sunscreen or keep it covered with clothing.

## Help is a Phone Call Away

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



### Symptom Support Telephone Service



#### During the day:

Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 3:30 pm

**Cancer Centre Symptom Support**  
**705-728-9090 x79565**



#### Evenings, weekends and holidays:

Monday – Friday from 5:00 pm – 8:00 am;  
weekends and holidays 24 hours.

**Bayshore CAREpath 1-877-681-3057**

To cancel or change your appointment, please call 705-728-9090 x43333, Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm.

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