



Moving oncology care
forward so that our
patients can look forward
to life's moments.

Advice for patients
receiving radiation
treatment to the pelvis









Making life better

Some people receiving radiation treatment may experience a skin reaction in the area being treated. Skin reactions vary from none to a sunburn-like reaction where the skin becomes reddened, dry and sometimes itchy. For most people, if a skin reaction is going to occur it is not usually apparent until after the second week of treatment and reaches its peak about two weeks after treatment is completed.

Not everyone will experience a skin reaction as it depends on the area being treated, the dose of radiation, the type of radiation and the number of treatments given.

The radiotherapists administering the treatment on the machines will keep a close eye on the condition of your skin during your treatment and can further advise you if a reaction appears. There are several things you can do to minimise skin reactions.

How to minimise skin reactions

	Shower as normal using warm rather than hot water. Allow the water to gently run over the treatment area. Avoid prolonged soaking in the bath or swimming as this may increase any reaction that occurs.
	Only if your oncologist recommends it may you use a mild, unscented, pH balanced soap e.g. baby soap or a similar gentle soap. Use soap sparingly in the area being treated.
	Do not rub the treated area. Friction aggravates the skin reaction. Dry it carefully by patting the area with a soft towel.
	Only if your oncologist recommends it may you use cornflour or baby/antiseptic powder on the area being treated.
	Do not be concerned if the pen marks on your skin rub off but do not deliberately remove them.
	Do not apply anything to the treated area unless a radiotherapist or your oncologist recommends it. Some skin preparations may increase the skin reaction.

	The skin between the buttocks or the groin may become irritated. Try not to scratch as this may increase the reaction. Tell your oncologist as they can advise on or prescribe creams to relieve the reaction symptoms.
	You may experience altered bladder and or bowel habits during your treatment. This can lead to nausea, constipation, diarrhoea and urgency or pain when passing urine. Tell a radiotherapist or your oncologist, they can advise on or prescribe medication to relieve or lessen the impact of reaction symptoms.
	Wear loose cotton underwear next to your skin if possible. Natural fibres tend to be tolerated better than synthetics.
	Avoid exposing the treated area to excessive heat or cold e.g. hot water bottles, heat bags, electric blankets or ice packs.
	You may have concerns about sexuality and fertility. Further information regarding these issues is available, please speak to your oncologist.
	If you are taking any vitamin supplements, please speak to your oncologist as to which supplements you can continue taking during treatment.
	It is common for patients receiving radiation to feel more tired than usual. This is a normal side-effect of radiation treatment.
	Your oncologist will see you once a week whilst you are on treatment. They may advise on, or prescribe creams and medications to help relieve symptoms.
	Do not hesitate to ask a radiotherapist or your oncologist if you have any questions or are experiencing any problems.
	Please inform your oncologist if you are taking any other treatments as these may reduce the effectiveness of your radiotherapy treatment or aggravate any side-effects.

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