

## Your care during and after radiation therapy to the abdomen

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### Your radiation treatment appointments

- Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment time
- Radiation treatment services are located on the **first floor** of Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC).
- When you arrive at the WFCC, check in at the registration desk and the clerk will direct you to the radiation therapy reception desk.
- Appointments are usually every day, Monday to Friday. There are no scheduled treatments on the weekends or holidays.
- Your treatment may be over several days or weeks and may start on any day of the week. We will give you a schedule of your treatment appointments.

### Treatment appointment changes

- Your schedule may change while you are on treatment. If so, we will try to give you as much notice as possible.



If you are unable to attend or will be late, please call us at 905-378-4647, extension 43899 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

If possible, please give us 24 hours notice.

### Your review appointments

- You will meet with a health care provider on a regular basis to check how you are doing. This may or may not be a doctor.
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## While on treatment

- Treatment appointments are 10 to 30 minutes long. Most of the time is spent getting ready for treatment. The actual time of the radiation beam is usually less than a few minutes each day.
- When you arrive in the radiation unit, you may be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- If you have questions, please ask your radiation therapist.
- During treatment, you will not feel the radiation at all. The therapist will guide you into the planned position and you will need to lie still and breathe as instructed.
- During treatment, the radiation therapists leave the room, but will watch you on a TV screen and speak with you by intercom.

## Side effects

The side effects you have will depend on:

- your general health
- any other treatments you may have had or are having
- the location of your tumour or lesion



Your health care team will check for side effects.

Please tell them your concerns.

### **Fatigue – more tired than usual**

You may feel tired over the course of your treatments. The reason behind this feeling is not known, but may be due to the stress of treatment combined with the tissue damage in the treated area. The tired feeling should go away gradually after treatment. Rest when needed.

### **Pain or discomfort in the abdomen**

Radiation can cause swelling in the tissue being treated. There are medications to help ease this discomfort. It will take 1 to 2 weeks for the swelling to decrease and the pain to lessen.

### **Nausea and vomiting**

Nausea and vomiting are quite common during treatment. If your treatment involves the stomach or gut, you may not feel like eating or drinking. There are medications and things you can do to lessen these symptoms. You want to make sure that you are getting enough fluids and nutrition during treatment.

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## **Side effects (continued)**

### **Dry cough**

If the area being treated includes the lower portion of a lung you may get a dry cough. You may need medication to stop the cough, but it will usually go away on its own a week or so after treatment.

### **Mild skin irritation in the treatment area**

The amount of radiation to the exposed skin is very small. However, you may have some redness and your skin may feel warm where the radiation beams enter and leave your body. The redness and warmth usually goes away on its own without medication or cream.

### **Diarrhea or loose stools**

Radiation can irritate your gut (bowels) causing it to move faster and be less able to absorb nutrition. You may have diarrhea or loose stools. You may need medication to get your bowels under control. You must also make sure that you get enough fluid and nutrition.

## **Take care of yourself**

Please follow these instructions during your treatments and for about 2 weeks after all treatments are done.

- Do not scrub or scratch your skin in the area being treated.
  - Gently wash the skin in the treatment area with warm water and a mild non-deodorant soap such as Dove or baby soap while bathing or taking a shower.
  - Pat dry with a soft towel.
  - Protect the treated skin from all sources of heat or cold such as hot water bottles, heating pads, ice packs or saunas. Protect the skin from direct sunlight or harsh cold.
  - Do not use any creams or lotions on the treatment area unless directed by your health care team.
  - Wear loose fitting cotton clothes.
  - Talk with your primary team before exercising or swimming.
  - Eat and drink to keep you nutritional and energy levels up.
  - Take rest periods during the day if needed and pace your activities.
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## Taking care of your skin during radiation treatments

During your radiation treatments, you may develop a skin reaction in the treatment area. A skin reaction from radiation will only happen in the area of your body being treated. Most skin reactions begin in the second week of treatment and develop gradually. A skin reaction is a side effect and does not have anything to do with whether or not your treatment is working.

How your skin reacts to radiation depends on:

- your skin type
- your planned treatment
- the amount and type of radiation
- number of radiation treatments

### What does a skin reaction look like?

Your skin may become warm to touch, tender, dry, itchy and look pink or red in colour. You may develop small blisters or peeling skin. Some people notice that they sweat or perspire less. Report any of these things to your primary care team during your visit.



### How long will a skin reaction last?

Once radiation treatments are done, the skin reaction will lessen and your skin will gradually heal. Most reactions improve by 3 -4 weeks after your treatment is finished.

### What can I do to lessen a skin reaction?

Taking care of your skin can help lessen any skin reaction you may experience. It also lessens the chance of an infection during your treatment. Please use the tips in this hand-out during your radiation treatments and for about 2 weeks after treatment or until the reaction (if you have one) starts to go away or fade.



### Can I wash, shower or take a bath?

- Wash, shower or bath daily with lukewarm water during.
- Avoid the direct stream of the shower on your treated skin.
- Use a mild unscented, non-deodorant soap over skin, example: Dove or baby soap.
- Be gentle when cleaning skin in treatment area and areas where there are skin folds. (Places where one area of skin touches another area of skin).
- Pat your skin dry with a clean, soft, cotton towel.
- Avoid scratching and scrubbing the skin in the area being treated.



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## What about creams, lotions, shaving, aftershaves and perfumes?

- It is important to apply moisturizer to the skin being treated a few times a day. We recommend any scent-free and lanolin free brand, eg. Glaxal base lotion/cream.
- Do not apply 2 hours before radiation treatments.
- Deodorant can be used if you have no open areas on your skin.
- Only **Electric razors** should be used on skin that is being treated.
- **NO** perfumes or aftershaves should be used on any treated skin.
- Any other cream or lotions to be used on the treated area must be recommended by your primary care team.



## What should I do when I go outside into the sun or cold weather?

Keep the treatment area protected from the sun and cold with clothing. **Do not** put sunscreen on treated skin until your treatments are complete.

Wear this:



Not this:



## Can I swim in pools or lakes? What about hot tubs and saunas?

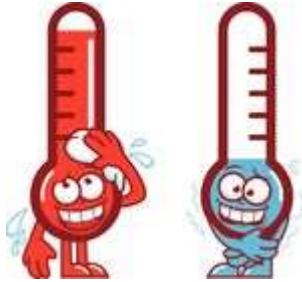
You can swim in pools or lakes as long as you do not have open areas on your skin. **Do not** use saunas or hot tubs because the heat may increase the chance of a skin reaction or make a skin reaction worse.



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## Can I use a hot water bottle, heating pad or cold pack on my skin?

Extreme heat or cold can increase the chance of skin reactions or make a skin reaction worse. **Do not use direct heat or cold on the area of skin being treated.** This includes hot water bottles, electric heating pads, any type of ice or icepack, and cold/hot therapy creams.



**NO  
Extreme  
Temperatures**



### Other tips:

Please follow the tips in this handout during your treatments and for about 2 weeks after all treatments are done.

- Wear loose-fitting clothing made of soft material such as cotton, over the area being treated.
- Avoid placing adhesive tape or band-aids on the treated skin.
- Talk with your primary team before exercising or swimming.
- Eat and drink to keep your energy levels up
- Take rest periods during the day and pace your activities if you need to.



### After your treatments



- Your skin in the treatment area may be dry and sensitive for some period of time after your treatments are done.
- The area that has been treated will be more sensitive to the sun. Keep the area covered or use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15, with UVA and UVB protection.