

Radiation Therapy Skin Care

You must take special care of your skin while undergoing radiation therapy. The skin in the treatment area needs to be protected from injury. There are some guidelines recommended by your healthcare provider to help protect your skin. Always check with your radiation physician or nurse before changing your skin care routine.

Approximately two to three weeks after beginning your therapy you may notice skin changes from the treatments. The time and severity of reaction will vary from patient to patient.

Below are recommendations for your skin care in the treated area during radiation therapy.



What to do:

- Keep the skin clean and dry.
- Use pure aloe gel or prescribed cream to area of treatment as instructed by your healthcare provider. You may use the gel or cream daily after your first day of treatment. You may apply more frequently as needed as your skin reaction increases. Pure aloe gel may be purchased at a pharmacy. “Fruit of the Earth” brand pure aloe gel is recommended. Make sure the aloe gel does not contain any alcohol. Never apply gel within four hours of your treatment time.
- Use mild, unscented soaps. Bathe using lukewarm water and with the palm of your hand, gently wash affected skin and do not lose the radiation marks. Rinse well. Pat area with a dry soft towel.
- Wear loose fitting clothing made of cotton or other soft fabrics. Avoid wearing nylon or polyester and bras with underwire.
- Protect skin from direct sunlight and wind exposure.
- If itching occurs in the treatment field, you may use hydrocortisone cream (not ointment) three to four times per day alternating with pure aloe gel.
- Use a non-aluminum deodorant under affected arm.
- Patients undergoing radiation treatment to pelvic area should begin sitz baths from the beginning of their treatment.
- Patients undergoing radiation treatment to the head should wash their hair using lukewarm water and mild, non-medicated shampoo.

What to avoid:

- Do not wash off the skin markings.
- Do not soak the treatment area without approval from your healthcare provider.
- Do not shave skin in treatment field.
- Do not apply any other creams, lotions or powders to treatment field without your physician's permission.
- Do not use ice packs.
- Do not use hot water bottles, heating pads or hot packs.
- Do not rub, scrub or scratch your skin.
- Avoid getting lotion on your marks as much as possible. It is important to apply gel in the folds and creases of your skin.
- Do not use adhesive tape or band-aids on the skin that is in the treatment field.
- Do not swim in salt water, pools, lakes or ponds, or soak in a hot tub unless so directed by your physician (e.g. sitz bath).
- Avoid direct sun exposure to the radiation area.
- Do not use suppositories or enemas if you receive radiation therapy to the rectal area unless directed by your physician.

We will frequently monitor your skin in the treatment field. In spite of these skin care recommendations, your skin reaction may require additional skin care products.

If you have any changes to the skin or questions related to skin care, please notify your physician or nurse.

After Radiation Therapy:

Your affected skin will be sensitive after radiation therapy. It takes time for the skin to recover from the radiation effects.

Continue to follow the recommended skin care for two to three weeks after therapy as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

After completing radiation and skin areas have healed, long-term moisturizing with over the counter lotion helps ward off chronic dryness.

Notes:
