



washing and bathing

Make sure the water is not too hot; wash the skin gently with products you would normally use and gently pat dry



deodorants/sprays

Please continue to use the deodorant you normally use, unless it irritates your skin; stop if your skin blisters or peels

'DON'Ts' for the treatment area

Please avoid...



rubbing the area



using sticky tape
on the area (such as Elastoplast™ or Micropore™)



shaving
reduce shaving if possible, unless advised differently



using wax, cream or lasers
for hair removal on or close to the treated area



using make-up
hair dye, perfumes and aftershave on or close to the treated area

After your treatment has finished...

Your reaction may worsen for the next **10-14 days**

 before starting to improve

Most patients find that their skin has improved around

4 weeks after treatment

If skin has blistered or peeled it may

take longer to heal



The treated area will be more sensitive than the rest of your skin, even once you have completed radiation therapy, especially to heat and sunlight.

Pain and swelling

Some swelling can occur in the treatment area causing discomfort or pain. Take pain relief such as paracetamol as required. Discuss with your treatment team if the pain continues while taking paracetamol.

Contacts

Regional Blood and Cancer Service

Building 8, Level 4, Auckland City Hospital

Auckland DHB

Phone: 09 307 4949

Reception ext 22631

Nurses ext 22837

Acute Oncology ext 23826 (Mon-Fri 8-4pm)

References

SCoR—The Society and College of Radiographers, 2021. <https://www.sor.org/news/scor-updates-radiation-dermatitis-guidelines>

Illustrated panels from the above reference

General side effects of Radiation Therapy Overview

Radiation therapy can cause side effects in your treatment area which can vary from patient to patient. The Radiation Oncologist will have discussed the possible short and long term side effects with you during the consent process.

This brochure explains the short term side effects. These symptoms can begin during a course of radiation therapy and may even peak 1-2 weeks after a treatment course is complete. They should have settled around 6 weeks after treatment.

The oncology nurses will see you on day one or two of your treatment to discuss any concerns or questions you have. Further assessments can be arranged at this time.

Most common side effects

- **Fatigue**
- **Skin reactions**
- **Pain and swelling in the treatment area.**

Haere Mai Welcome | Manaaki Respect
Tūhono Together | Angamua Aim High

We're here to help!

Every day a radiation therapist will ask how you are. Please do not hesitate to voice any concerns. If you're experiencing any of these side effects (not limited to this list), we can refer you to our oncology nurses to discuss further.

Fatigue

There are many contributing factors that will cause tiredness.

- The effect of treatment on normal cells
- Stress related to your illness
- Daily travel to treatment
- Balancing life outside your treatment
- Financial concerns.

Suggestions:

- Ensure you're eating a balanced diet (additional supplements are **not** recommended, unless prescribed by your oncology team)
- Drink plenty of fluids – unless on fluid restrictions
- Rest and gentle exercise (e.g. walking)
- Practice self care (personal techniques that help you relax)
- Accept help from others.

Skin Reactions

You may develop a skin reaction during and after your radiation therapy. Follow the advice for how you can look after your skin.

A skin reaction will only occur in the area being treated. If you have further questions please speak with your radiation therapist or oncology nurse.

How might my skin react to treatment?

A radiation therapy skin reaction is likely for most patients. It won't happen straight away but tends to develop gradually throughout treatment, and usually starts to settle 2-4 weeks after treatment finishes.

During the course of your radiation therapy you may develop a skin reaction and notice your skin:



gradually become pinker or darker

depending on your skin colour



feel dry or tight, and sore



develop a rash and feel itchy

This may feel worse when you get warm or hot



blister or peel

If this happens seek further advice as you may need dressings or gel

Skin care advice

Reactions to your skin cannot be prevented however there are things you can do to help yourself feel more comfortable.

Tell your radiation therapist or nurse about your skin care routine. They will let you know if you should make any changes to your routine to help you feel more comfortable.



you may

go swimming if your skin is NOT blistered or peeling

It is best to shower immediately afterwards to wash off the chlorine and then apply moisturiser. Please stop swimming if it irritates your skin



you may

find it more comfortable to wear loose-fitting clothing

made of natural fibres, such as cotton or silk



please avoid

sun exposure and protect the area from direct sunlight

You can wear a brimmed hat and/or cover up with clothing. Continue to protect the treated area from the sun for at least one year after you have finished treatment. Because your skin will be more sensitive, use sunscreen with SPF 50 (sun protection factor 50)

Note: Please do not use sunscreen during treatment.

Hygiene and moisturising

- If required our nurses will give you a moisturiser to use during treatment. If you have a preferred one please bring it in to show our nurses.
- Use the moisturiser a few times daily. Do not apply immediately before your treatment.
- Please stop using it if your skin becomes irritated, blisters or peels.

Itchy or broken skin : Salt-water solution

Your radiation therapist or oncology nurse may recommend salt water bathing for itchy or broken down skin in the treatment area:

- Before starting ensure you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Make the solution: ½ teaspoon of salt per cup of cooled boiled water.
- Prepare the solution fresh each day.
- Discuss this with your oncology nurses for further instructions.