

Skin Reactions

Reddening of the skin (erythema) in the treatment area is possible. It will not happen straight away but tends to develop gradually throughout treatment and usually starts to settle 2-4 weeks after treatment finishes.



gradually become
pinker or darker



feel dry or
tight, and sore



develop a rash
and feel itchy

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 any changes are advised.



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



please avoid

sun exposure and protect the
area from direct sunlight

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.



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



shaving



using wax,
cream or lasers

Nausea

Sickness is more likely to affect people who are having combined chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Please see our oncology nurses if the nausea becomes a problem.

If you are vomiting you can become dehydrated. Ensure you keep drinking fluids and speak to our team.

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.

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

eviQ—Patient and carers, patient information sheets, managing side effects, inflammation of the food pipe, 1D: 1929 v.3, eviQ Cancer treatments Online, Cancer Institute NSW, viewed 31 December 2020., <https://www.eviq.org.au/patients-and-carers/patient-information-sheets/managing-side-effects/1929-oesophagitis-inflammation-of-the-food-pipe>

Radiation Therapy to the Chest: Side Effects 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.

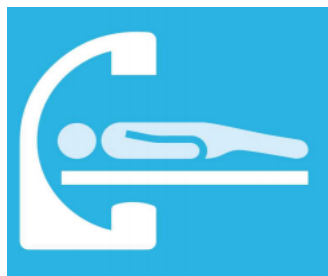
Welcome Haere Mai | Respect Manaaki
Together Tūhono | Aim High Angamua

Most Common Side Effects

- Fatigue
- Oesophagitis – inflammation of the food pipe
- Dry or sore throat and/or cough
- Skin reactions
- Nausea
- Pain and swelling

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.



Contacts

Regional Blood and Cancer Service

Building 8, Level 4, Auckland City Hospital

Auckland District Health Board

Phone: 09 307 4949

Reception ext 22631

Nurses ext 22837

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

Fatigue

There are many contributing factors which will cause tiredness.

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

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 (walking)
- Practice self care (personal techniques that help you relax)
- Accept help from others.

Oesophagitis – inflammation of the food pipe

The oesophagus (food pipe) can become inflamed or irritated during radiation therapy to the chest. Not all patients will experience this.

Signs to look out for include:

- Weight loss
- Pain when eating and drinking – odynophagia
- Difficulty swallowing – dysphagia
- Heartburn
- Acidic taste in the back of the throat
- Changes in taste
- Infections
- Nausea and vomiting
- Bleeding (rare)

If you experience any of these side effects please let your treatment team know.

What can I do to manage this?

- Regular pain medication recommended by your doctor or nurse
- Pain medication such as paracetamol.

Diet changes:

- Eat small frequent meals
- Aid digestion by sitting upright after eating
- Eat a balanced diet and ensure you're drinking plenty of fluids
- Eat soft or moist foods such as rice, mashed potato, scrambled eggs and yogurt – make use of gravies and sauces.

Avoid:

- Crunchy, acidic and spicy foods
- Food and drink that are very hot or cold
- Don't drink alcohol or sour juices.

We have a dietitian who can offer advice and assist you during your radiation therapy.

Dry / sore throat

Sometimes the throat and trachea (windpipe) are in the treatment field. This can cause inflammation in the mucous lining.

- Our nurses can offer advice on gargles to use or pain relief
- Drink plenty of fluids

Cough:

- Please speak to our nurses for advice
- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking during and 2 weeks after treatment.