



## 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.

### 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)

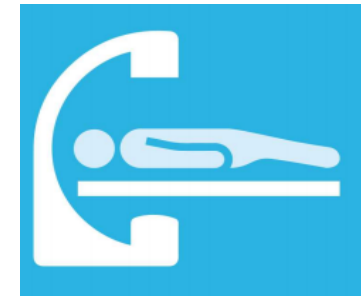
### Reference

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

# Skin care during Radiation Therapy Overview

This pamphlet describes the skin reactions you may develop during and after your radiation therapy. It also provides advice on 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?

Radiation Therapy skin reactions are common. They will not happen straight away but tend to develop gradually throughout treatment, and usually start to settle 2-4 weeks after treatment finishes.

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



### gradually become pinker or darker

depending on your skin colour



### develop a rash and feel itchy

This may feel worse when you get warm or hot



### feel dry or tight, and sore



### blister or peel

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

## What can make my skin reaction worse?

- If you are prescribed a higher dose of radiation for your type of cancer
- If you receive treatment to areas where your skin folds e.g. groin, breast, buttocks or armpit
- If you receive treatment to your head and neck area – due to the sensitive nature of the skin and the tendency for this area to be exposed to the sun
- If you smoke – this can affect the oxygen levels in your skin
- If you have other conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

## Skin care advice

Skin reactions can't be prevented. However, there are things you can do to help yourself feel more comfortable.

Tell your radiation therapist or oncology nurse about your skincare routine. They will let you know if any changes are advised.

- Keep hydrated (unless on fluid restrictions)
- Eat a well-balanced diet.



### 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, your nurse will give you a moisturiser to use during treatment. If you have a preferred one, please bring it in to show your nurse.
- Use the moisturiser a few times daily. Do not apply it 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.
- Ensure you discuss this with your oncology nurses for clear instructions.