

## Skin Care During Your Radiation Therapy

*This handout is for people having radiation treatments. It offers tips to protect your skin and specific care tips for the area being treated.*

### How Radiation May Affect Your Skin

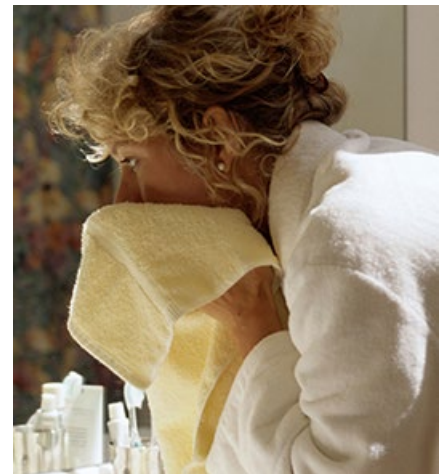
After 2 to 3 weeks of radiation treatment, your skin in the area being treated may:

- Look red, irritated, or sunburned
- Be dry and itchy or begin to peel

Closely watch all places with skin folds. These include your neck, stomach, armpits, under your breast, and in your groin or crotch. The skin in these areas is more likely to become irritated.

### Tips to Help Protect Your Skin

- Ask your radiation therapist what area of your skin may be affected by your radiation therapy.
- Bathe and shower as normal. But, do **not** use soaps that contain lotions, perfumes, or deodorants. Instead, use brands such as Ivory, Sensitive Skin Dove, Basis, or Neutrogena.
- Be extra gentle with your skin.
- Wear loose, soft clothing over the treated area.
- Your skin in the treated area will be very sensitive. If you must shave in the treated area, use **only** an electric razor. Do **not** use straight-edge or safety razors.
- Wear a hat, scarf, or other clothing to protect your skin from the sun.



*Be very gentle with your skin while you are having radiation therapy.*

- Keep the treatment area clean and dry.
- Gently wash off all creams and lotions before each radiation treatment.
- Talk with your radiation nurse if you have questions about your skin. Tell your nurse if you have any problems with your skin, or notice any changes in your skin.

## Basic Skin Care

- Do **not** use perfume, pre-shave or aftershave, deodorant, hair conditioner, or other styling products on the area being treated, unless your doctor or nurse says it is OK to do so.
- Do **not** use products that contain metals like aluminum or zinc, including zinc oxide ointment.
- Do **not** use oil- or petroleum-based products such as Vaseline, baby oil, ointments, or vitamin E oil during your treatment.
- Do **not** apply any gel, lotion, or cream to your skin for 2 hours before each treatment.
- Do **not** use cornstarch or powder on your skin. These products can lead to fungus on your skin.
- Do **not** apply heat or cold to your treated skin. Do not use heating pads, electric blankets, hot water bottles, or ice packs.
- Do **not** expose the treated area to extreme heat or cold. Avoid very hot showers or baths, saunas or steam rooms, direct sunlight, or cold air direct from an air conditioner.
- Do **not** use tape or Band-Aids on the treatment area.
- Do **not** scrub your skin with a washcloth.
- Do **not** scratch, scrub, or rub your skin.
- Do **not** wear tight clothing over the treatment area.

## Care for the Area Being Treated

### Scalp

- Use baby shampoo or Neutrogena.
- Do **not** use conditioners, shampoo with conditioners, or styling products.
- Always wear a hat when you are outside.

## Face and Neck

- Do **not** use makeup, moisturizer, sunscreen, perfume, or aftershave.
- Keep the area shaded from the sun.

## Chest

- Do **not** use deodorant, unless your doctor says it is OK to do so.
- Wear clothes that protect your chest from the sun.

## Belly or Pelvis

- Do **not** use lotion, powder, or cream on the area.
- Clean your bottom well after bowel movements.
- Allow your skin to air dry. If your skin is irritated, do **not** scrub or towel dry.

## Arms, Hands, Fingers, Legs, Feet, or Toes

- Do **not** use lotion, cream, or sunscreen.
- Wear loose clothing.
- Wear shoes that do give your toes and feet plenty of room.

## Keep Your Skin Safe from the Sun

Your skin in the treatment area will be very sensitive to the sun for years after radiation treatment. You will need to treat your skin carefully. Sunburn may cause your skin to have the same reaction it did to the radiation.

After your skin heals from treatment:

- Use sunscreen (30 SPF or higher) **every** time you go outside.
- Do **not** let the treatment area be in direct sun for long periods.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

UW Medical Center Radiation Oncology: 206.598.4100