

Self-Care after Completion of Breast Radiation

Skin care

Your skin in your treatment area may look red, tan or darker for days or weeks. Dry, peeling skin is normal. **If you see sores, blisters or moist areas on your skin, call your doctor or nurse to discuss options.**

You can gently remove any marks on your skin with soap and water. Do not scrub the area. Treat your skin gently until it is fully healed. Use skin care products that your doctor or nurse suggests for at least 1 to 2 weeks after treatments. Any tattoos are permanent and will not come off.

The skin that was treated may be more sensitive to the sun and sunburn easier.

- **Avoid having your treatment area in the direct sun until your skin has fully healed. Talk about sun exposure with your doctor.**
- Protect your skin from the sun by using sun protective clothing or sitting under an umbrella. This is preferred over sunscreen.
- Be careful with sunscreen after treatment as it may cause irritation. When using sunscreen, use sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 or higher.
- Be careful with skin creams and sunscreens with active ingredients like retinol or salicylic acid because they may bother your skin. Avoid aerosol sunscreens because they may sting or burn.
- Do not put anything on your skin that is very hot or cold, such as ice or heating pads, until your skin is fully healed.

Please talk to your radiation doctor about skin care recommendations for your personal case, as each patient's case may differ.

Fatigue

Fatigue is when you feel weak, worn out, tired or slow. It is a common side effect that should get better within a few weeks. To learn about ways to help manage fatigue, ask your nurse for our fatigue handout.

Follow-up care

A follow-up visit with a radiation team member will be scheduled for you. Your doctor may also order blood work or testing that needs to be done before your visit.

Diet

If you were asked to follow a special diet during treatment, stay on it for several days after your treatment is done, or as directed by the dietitian. As your body recovers, try to eat healthy foods and increase your protein intake. For guidance, ask to talk with a dietitian.

If you were taking supplements or antioxidants before radiation, ask your nurse or doctor when you can restart taking them.

Resources and support

Once cancer treatment is done, it's normal to have different feelings. You may be relieved and glad it's over. You may also feel unsure or worried about what comes next. It can take time to recover, adjust and find out what's normal for you now. If you need help or support, please talk with a member of your cancer care team. These resources may help:

Facing Forward:

Life after Cancer Treatment

from the National Cancer Institute



Nutrition and Physical Activity after Cancer Treatment

from the American Cancer Society



For a copy of these books, call our patient education office at 216-844-5432. To view online, visit www.uhhospitals.org/seidmaneducation and scroll to the Support section or scan the QR codes.

Reasons to call your radiation doctor or nurse



- Blisters or sores on your skin
- Unplanned weight loss
- Problems eating or swallowing
- Fatigue that is so bad that you cannot do your normal activities like getting dressed, bathing or making meals
- Questions, concerns or if you are admitted to any hospital

Doctor name and phone: _____

This info is a general resource. It is not meant to replace your doctor's advice.
Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.