

KATHLEEN KILGOUR CENTRE

Leading Radiation Therapy



General Skin Care

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Importance of skin care

Skin changes occur because Radiation Therapy can affect healthy skin cells in the treatment area. It is important that you follow the skin care advice given by your treatment team and check with your Radiation Oncologist (Doctor), Radiation Therapist or Nurse before using any creams, lotions, or cosmetics in the treatment area.

It is also important to check your skin daily and report any changes. Sometimes a skin reaction can occur on the side of the body where the radiation beam leaves the body, so check for changes to this area of your skin as well. If you are not sure, please ask us.

What changes can you expect to see on your skin?

The first effects of Radiation Therapy on your skin usually occur around 2-3 weeks after your first treatment.

During Radiation Therapy your skin can change in appearance and may:

- Become pinker than normal
- Become red similar to a sunburn
- Feel warm to touch
- Become sensitive, tingly or sore
- Become dry and flaky
- Peel, blister or weep
- Develop a discharge and/or odour

How long will the skin changes last?

The changes to your skin continue for the duration of your Radiation Therapy treatment. Each person's skin reacts differently to the Radiation Therapy treatment. It is common for skin changes to continue and change throughout your treatment, but these changes usually improve within 2-4 weeks of your treatment finishing.

How should I care for my skin during Radiation Therapy treatment?

Below is some general advice and information about how to care for your skin during Radiation Therapy. Please refer to the site specific pamphlets for more detailed information on specific areas of the body. Skin care will also be discussed with your treatment team on your first day of treatment.

It is important for you to:

- Check with your treatment team before using any creams or other products on the skin in the treatment area. Unperfumed moisturizers such as fatty cream or calendula cream are usually recommended
- Report any areas of broken skin or blisters to your treatment team and stop using creams in the treatment area until the area has been reviewed
- Where possible, wear loose cotton clothing as cotton allows sweat to evaporate more effectively, causing less rubbing in the treatment area
- Bathe the treatment area gently using warm water and a mild **unscented soap**
- Pat treatment area dry with a soft towel; do not rub with a rough towel

It is important for you to AVOID:

- Scratching the skin in the treatment area (if your skin becomes itchy, speak to your doctor or nurse about a cream that may help to relieve the itch)
- Using hot or ice cold packs directly on the skin in the treatment area
- Rubbing off any pen marks on your skin as these will fade with time
- Using talcum/baby powder in the treatment area as these products may irritate the skin
- Using any creams on the treatment area directly before your Radiation Therapy treatment
- Shaving, waxing or using hair removal creams in the treatment area as this may irritate your skin
- Wearing tight, restrictive clothing, as this can cause rubbing in the treatment area (e.g. bras)
- Using adhesive tapes on the treated areas
- Sun exposure on the treatment area (i.e. cover with clothing or a hat)

Can I go swimming during treatment?

You can swim in salt water during your treatment; however, it is important to wash off in clean water afterwards. You are advised to avoid swimming in **hot pools, spa baths and chlorinated pools** as the high heat and chlorine may irritate the skin in the treatment area. If you are not sure, please ask the treatment team.