

Radiation Therapy to the Pelvis (Prostate, Bladder, Colon)

About 2 to 3 weeks after your first radiation treatment, you may notice skin changes of your abdomen and pelvis. These changes are an expected part of your therapy and are short-term. The following instructions will help you care for these areas and decrease the effects of radiation.

Skin Care

- Do not remove the colored marks from your skin. These outline the area to be treated and must remain in place until treatments are completed. Do not sit in a tub. You may shower.
- Avoid all soaps, lotions, ointments, cosmetics, and perfumed powders on the treatment area. You may dust the area with baby powder or cornstarch.
- Do not use heating pads or ice bags on the treatment area.
- Keep the treated area out of the sun.
- Skin changes such as redness, dryness, peeling, and tanning can happen. Itching and dryness may occur. Do not scratch your skin. Please report any break in the skin to the doctor or nurse.
- Your body hair in the treatment area will begin to fall out between 2 and 3 weeks after beginning treatments.
- Keep buttocks and pelvic areas clean and dry. Gently pat the rectal area after each bowel movement.
- A warm sitz bath (sitting in a few inches of warm water in a bathtub) may help.
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing around your stomach and pelvic area. For women, it is best not to wear girdles or pantyhose. Cotton underwear is the best choice.

The lining of the bowel is sensitive to radiation. Your treatment may cause bloating, cramps, diarrhea (loose stools), or sense of urgency to have a bowel movement. These symptoms may occur during the second or third week of treatment.

Diet

- **Do not** take a laxative.
- Drink plenty of liquids: 8 to 10 glasses of fluids per day, not including citrus juices. Choose flat soda, broths, water or juice without pulp.
- Eat small frequent meals. Room temperature food and drink may be easier to tolerate.
- You will be placed on a low-residue diet unless your doctor advises against it. The nurse will help you with this. Low-residue means avoiding fiber rich foods such as bran, nuts, whole grain or hard to digest foods. You should include cooked, peeled or canned fruits and vegetables.
- Diarrhea and urinary frequency and burning may occur later on in treatments and can be controlled by diet and medicines. Be sure to let your radiation team know if this occurs.
- You may return to your normal diet once your bowel function is regular.
- Tell your physician or nurse if diarrhea persists or if there is blood in your stool or urine. Dehydration (loss of water and nutrients in the stool) can be a serious complication.

General

- You may take one multi-vitamin daily. Do not take anti-oxidants or mega-vitamins during your radiation therapy.
- It is important to use birth control during treatment and for some time after treatment completes.

Please remember, if you have any questions or concerns, please ask your radiation team or call us at (315) 464-5276. We will be happy to answer your questions.