

This instruction is intended for our patients who are in a care relationship.

Satakunta Hospital District | Wellbeing Services County of Ostrobothnia | Hospital District of Southwest Finland

Side effects of radiation therapy to the pelvic area

Radiation therapy can have side effects, but they are usually temporary and rarely severe. Side effects can continue even after the treatment has ended. Follow these instructions as long as the side effects from radiation therapy continue.

Side effects depend on the individual and they depend on the dose and the size of the treated area.

Common side effects

Diarrhea and flatulence

Avoid:

- Flatulence causing food ingredients e.g. cabbage, onion, peas, beans, apple, sweet pepper, rye bread and strongly seasoned foods
- Alcohol
- Greasy and fried foods

Prefer:

- Instead of regular milk use intestine soothing acidophilus- and gefilus-products or use lactic acid bacteria pills
- Small meals often
- Cooked or stewed foods

You can buy anti-flatulence and anti-diarrhea drugs from pharmacy.

Constipation

Drinking lots of fluid (2 liters /day) keeps the content of the intestine soft and eases defecating. Even though radiation therapy can change the habit of your bowel action, it is good that you empty your bowels at least once a day. If you empty your bowel less often, you can buy anti-constipation drugs from pharmacy.

Irritation in anal area

Emptying your bowels can cause pain because of the irritated anal area. You can use suitable painkillers. External and internal creams for hemorrhoids can help. You can use these daily after radiation therapy.

Side effects on the skin

During radiation therapy, it is good to take care of your hygiene. If your gluteal cleft is irritated, shower the cleft and use basic, unscented moisturizing cream after radiation therapy daily. If necessary, you can get separate instructions for skin care.

Bladder irritation

It is important to drink lots of fluid. It is good to drink two liters a day. Fluid rinses urinary tracts and decreases burning feeling during urinating. If you have a feeling that you need to pass urine more often or you have burning feeling when you urinate, you can take regular painkillers.

Dryness in the mucous membrane

You can get instructions how to treat dry mucous membrane from doctor and nurses.

Sex life

Radiation therapy to the pelvic area can cause problems in sex life. You can get help from doctor and sexologist.

Fatigue

Worrying about the future and daily treatments can cause fatigue. Side effects can also lower your abilities.

Exercise

Do light exercises e.g. outdoor activities, but make sure you get enough rest.

Other considerations

In radiation therapy, you should have urine in your bladder and your rectum should be empty.

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