

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**

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## **Side effects of radiation therapy to the esophagus**

Radiation therapy may have side effects, but they are usually temporary and rarely severe. Side effects may continue even after radiation therapy 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**

#### **Irritation to the esophagus and heartburn**

You can ease irritation and heartburn by

- eating lukewarm food calmly and small meals often
- avoiding citrus fruits and hard and coarse foods
- avoiding greasy and fried foods
- taking regularly heartburn medicine and pain killers that your doctor may have prescribed

#### **Weight loss**

You can experience problems with your appetite due to swallowing problems and nausea. If necessary, you can have prescription for anti-nausea medicine. If your nutrition is inadequate and weight decreases, nurses will give you instructions on how to use supplements.

You can buy supplements from pharmacy without prescription. These supplements contain lots of energy and nutrients. If necessary, you can meet with a dietician.

#### **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.

#### **Quit smoking**

Quitting smoking is an important part of cancer treatments. Smoking may reduce effectiveness of radiation therapy and prolong side effects. Smoking also increases the risk of a new cancer. You can get help to quit smoking from doctor and nurses.

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