

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

**Satakunta Hospital District | Vaasa Hospital District | Hospital District of Southwest Finland**

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## **Skin Care During Radiation Therapy**

Skin reactions caused by radiation therapy depend on the individual. If there are side effects, they usually begin more than two weeks after the treatment has begun. Side effects can only occur in the treated area. By following these instructions from the beginning of treatment, you will help your skin to better tolerate the side effects caused by radiation therapy.

### **Practical Tips for Protecting the Skin**

- Take care of your hygiene.
- When washing yourself, you should shower the skin of the treatment area with lukewarm water (avoid high water pressure) without soap at least once a day. After showering, gently pat dry the skin using a soft towel.
- Take air baths, i.e. keep the treatment area uncovered for at least 20 minutes twice a day.
- You start using moisturizing cream from the beginning of the treatment.
- Do not use deodorant, aftershave lotion or perfume in the area being treated.
- You can go to a sauna in mild heat and swim if the skin is normal. In sauna you can cover the skin by a wet towel.
- Do not wear tight or rough-textured clothes in the area being treated and protect the skin from hot and cold.
- During radiation therapy, you should not shave hair in the skin area being treated. If you have beard in the treatment area, you can shave it carefully using an electronic razor.
- Light exercise is allowed and recommended.
- Smoking reduces skin blood flow and thus quitting smoking is highly recommended.

### **If Skin Becomes Red and Feels Hot**

- Continue taking air baths and showers.
- Add a thin layer of moisturizing cream in the area being treated 1–2 times a day, not before radiation therapy. You can use milky, water-soluble and unscented moisturizing cream that can be bought at the pharmacy.

- You should avoid sauna and swimming.

### **If Skin is Red, Itchy or Blistering**

- Continue taking air baths and showers.
- Continue to use moisturizing cream.
- Do not scratch the skin. You can use over-the-counter allergy medicines to ease the itching.
- If there is pain in the skin area being treated, you can use regular pain relief.
- You can begin salt water treatment if the skin is about to start blistering.

### **Salt water poultice**

- Boil one litre of water and add one tea spoon of salt, or you can buy ready-made salt water solution at the pharmacy.
- Cool the solution to room temperature.
- Wet a clean piece of cloth with the solution.
- Place the poultice in the reddened area of skin and keep it for about 20 minutes.
- Remove the poultice and the dead skin that may have come off. Pat dry the skin.
- The poultice is reuseable.

### **If Skin is Broken and Ulcerated**

- Discontinue using moisturizing cream in broken parts of skin. Do not touch the broken skin because there is a risk of inflammation.
- If needed you get a wound protecting dressing.

### **After Radiation Therapy**

- Follow these skin care instructions for as long as the side effects of radiation therapy continue, usually for approximately two weeks after the treatment has ended.
- You should avoid sauna and swimming until your skin has recovered from the treatment.
- Protect the treated area from sunshine for at least a year after the treatment period. In the future, use a sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor of 30.

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