Skin Care During Radiation Therapy
Patient Education

It is common to have skin changes during radiation therapy. Changes in your skin usually occur one to two weeks into treatment and may last one to two weeks after the last treatment. The skin changes are temporary and will generally improve after radiation is complete. The information listed below is to help prepare you for skin changes you may see and how to care for your skin in the area of treatment.

Below are guidelines to care for your skin during treatment. Continue this skin care regimen until the skin changes resolve. These refer to the skin only in the area being treated.

Keep Your Skin Clean:

- Bathe or shower daily using warm water and a mild unscented soap (i.e., Dove, Cetaphil, Neutrogena). Rinse skin well, and pat dry with a soft towel.
- Be gentle to your skin and do not rub, scrub, or scratch the area being treated.
- The tattoo marks are permanent and will not wash off. You may get other markings during treatment, for example a black felt tipped marker outline of your treatment area. Be careful not to wash off the ink markings that you need for radiation therapy.
- If your scalp is in the treated area, use a mild shampoo (i.e., Johnson’s Baby Shampoo). Avoid the use of blow dryers, curling irons or hot curlers.

Moisturize Your Skin:

- Start using a moisturizer when you begin treatment. APPLY THE MOISTURIZER 3 TIMES A DAY.
- Apply any of the following recommended over-the-counter moisturizers to the treatment area:
  
  Cetaphil
  Eucerin
  Lubriderm
  Remedy Skin Repair Cream
  Biafine Topical Emulsion (prescription required)
  Aquaphor

- Pure Aloe Vera (colorless and odorless) is recommended when skin changes start to feel like a sunburn. This is not a moisturizer, use along with one of the recommended moisturizers listed above.

- DO NOT APPLY THE MOISTURIZER 2 HOURS BEFORE YOUR TREATMENT.
Avoid Irritating Your Skin:

- Do not use make-up, perfumes, or powders in the area of radiation treatment.
- Do not apply tapes or adhesives to the treatment area.
- Do not shave the treated skin. If you have to shave, use only an electric shaver. Stop if skin becomes irritated.
- Wear cotton shirts with loose fitting collars. Cotton bras without underwire are suggested for women undergoing breast radiation. Cotton boxers are recommended for those undergoing radiation to the pelvis.
- Avoid deodorants that contain aluminum if you are receiving treatment to your breast or axilla area. Recommended deodorants: Crystal or Tom’s of Maine
- Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun. Use a PABA-free sunblock with an SPF of 30 or higher. If receiving treatment in the head and neck area, wear a wide-brimmed hat that shades your face and neck.
- Do not apply extreme heat or cold to the treated area. Avoid hot tubs, water bottles, heating pads, and ice packs.
- REPORT ANY BLISTERING, WET AREAS, ITCHING, OR BRIGHT REDNESS TO YOUR NURSE.