

General Skin Care Instructions

During radiation therapy, temporary changes occur to the skin in the treatment area. The skin becomes more sensitive. Clothing and cleansing may cause irritation. You may experience varying degrees of redness, tanning, a burning sensation, dryness and/or flaking. On rare occasions the skin will show areas of blisters and cracking. These temporary changes vary in degree for each patient and may occur at any time from the first few weeks of treatment and last for several weeks after treatment is finished. After treatment is completed the skin usually returns to its normal appearance within a few weeks. Occasionally a slight tanning effect remains.

Basic Guidelines to Help

Lessen Skin Irritation

1. Bathe the treatment area daily with lukewarm (never hot) water. If showering, just let the water run over the area.
2. Use mild, unscented, non-alkaline soap to prevent further drying of the skin in the radiation treatment field.
3. Use a washcloth or the tips of fingers to clean the skin over the treatment field.
4. Pat the area dry with a soft towel. Avoid vigorous rubbing or scrubbing.

Clothing

1. Wear loose clothes to prevent chafing or rubbing. Fabric of 100 % cotton is usually recommended for clothing in contact with areas receiving treatment. Polyesters, wools and synthetics can retain perspiration and be irritating.

Sun & Wind

1. Protect the treatment area from sun and wind exposure by making sure the area is covered when you are outdoors.
2. After therapy is complete, be sure to protect the treated area by keeping it covered and using a broad spectrum sun screen (at least 30 spf for one year).

Shaving

If you must shave in the treatment area, use an electric razor. However, check with the radiation oncologist before doing this. After several weeks the radiation will temporarily suppress the hair growth and you will not find it necessary to shave.

Heat or Cold

While under treatment avoid the use of hot water, heat lamps, hot water bottles, hot compresses, heating pads, hot or cold packs, ice packs and very cold water. Avoid saunas, steam baths and hot tubs.

Moisturize your skin often:

1. If you are likely to get a skin reaction, your nurse will recommend that you start using a moisturizer. You may start moisturizing the skin over your treatment area prior to your start date. Moisturizers will not prevent a skin reaction from occurring.
2. You may use over-the-counter moisturizers. Choose a moisturizer that does not have any fragrances or lanolin. There are several products that are good to use, and your nurse will suggest a few. Please let your nurse know which one you decide on if you choose something other than what is recommended.
3. Apply the moisturizer at least two times a day.

-If your radiation treatment is in the morning, apply it: After your treatment and again before bedtime.

-If your radiation treatment is in the afternoon, apply it: In the morning before your treatment and again at bedtime.

*** Do not apply lotion 4 hours before your treatment as it will change the thickness of your skin. You do not need to wash lotion off if you applied it more than 4 hours before treatment because it has had time to absorb.

Recommended lotions:

We recommend using Aquaphor, Miaderm or Calendula and will send you home with a sample of each.

*Do not use Calendula if you are allergic to ragweed.

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Where to buy recommended lotions:

Aquaphor – All drug stores carry this product. We can give you free samples as well. Cost: Approximately \$8.00 for 3oz. size.

Calendula – CVS, Lazy Acres, Whole Foods and Lassen’s. Cost: Approximately \$12.99 for 2.5 oz. size.

Miaderm –Miaderm.com and Amazon.com. Approximately \$36.00 for 4oz. size.

*All the above items can be purchased at Sansum Clinic Pharmacy, located at 317 W. Pueblo St., just across the street.

Avoid the following:

- a. Scratching the skin over the treatment field. This can cause additional trauma to the skin.
- b. Shaving the skin over the treatment field. This can cause additional trauma to the skin.
- c. Applying adhesive tapes to the treatment field to prevent skin tears.
- d. Sun exposure to the treatment field.
- e. Chlorinated pools and hot tubs, which can cause additional drying of the skin over the treatment field.
- f. Oceans, lakes and rivers until the skin has healed to prevent infections.

If you experience any skin discomfort in the treatment area, please inform a member of the staff prior to treatment. You will be examined once a week by the radiation oncologist. Your radiation oncologist is available more often if necessary. Please do not hesitate to ask questions or let us know if you have any concerns.