

Skincare during radiotherapy

Self-care for your skin

This booklet is for patients that are about to undergo radiotherapy. Within the booklet you will find information on 'self-care' to protect and care for your skin during and immediately following treatment.

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HEALTHCARE

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Your Healthcare Professional (HCP) will give you advice on washing & dressing, moisturising and protecting your skin from the sun and cold.

Together with your HCP you can take suitable precautions from day 1 of radiotherapy.

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Your doctor has recommended radiotherapy

You are not alone: 1 in 2 cancer patients receive radiotherapy at some time or another.

For many patients being made aware they will have to undergo radiotherapy is an emotional experience filled with uncertainty.

Within this booklet you will find answers to some of the questions you may have with regards to how to protect & care for your skin during and after your radiotherapy treatment.



Strong skin

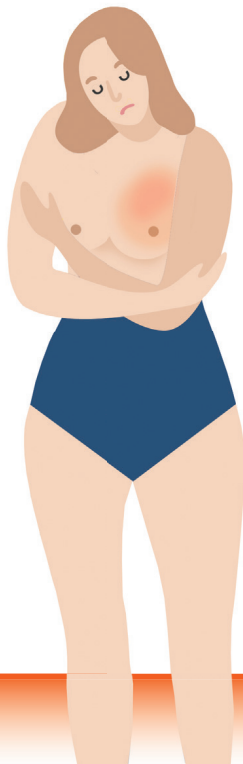
Radiotherapy (or radiation therapy) aims to destroy cancer cells. In doing so, radiation therapy also affects the surrounding tissue and skin. However, healthy tissue recovers more quickly than cancer cells. This means that the treatment is able to destroy the cancer, while healthy cells can recover.



Possible skin reaction

Radiotherapy can cause redness to the skin at an early stage. The skin can then become dry and flaky, after which blisters may appear. Your skin can also itch and even become painful.

It is important to try and limit the skin damage caused by the radiotherapy so that you can complete your treatment as comfortably as possible. You can do a lot yourself, see our tips further on in this guide.



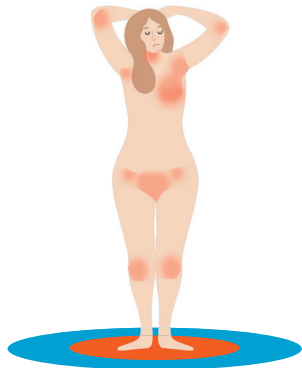
Skin sensitivity

During the course of your radiotherapy your skin might start to feel itchy and you may develop a rash, your skin may also feel dry, tight or sore.

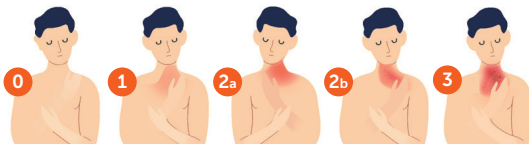
The sensitivity to skin reactions during radiotherapy depends on many factors. Reactions can be treatment related, such as the dose administered on each occasion. There is also the matter of individual sensitivity.

Areas on the body where your skin folds are more likely to suffer skin reactions: breast, armpit, groin and skin around intimate areas. Skin around the joints is also more sensitive.

Skin reactions can sometimes be worse in the head and neck area, this is due to the sensitive nature of the skin in this area and the tendency for this area to be exposed to the sun. If you are receiving treatment on your neck, then you can help by wearing a cotton or silk scarf when you go outside.



Five stages



Skin reactions during radiotherapy are categorised in five stages according to their severity, from stage 0 (unaffected skin) to stage 3. There are specific recommendations relating to skin and wound care for each of these stages.

Specific treatments are available. The Health Care Professionals in your clinical team will give you assistance.

Skin reactions during radiotherapy

Symptoms

- No skin reaction
- Mild to painful redness
- Dry flaky skin
- Itchy blisters

Treatment

Use a hydro-active ccloid gel such as Flamigel®. Apply a liberal amount of Flamigel® to the treated area from day 1 and apply 3 times per day.



- Damp flaky skin
- Open wounds

Specific wound care, recommended by your Health Care Professional.

Don't delay, act from day 1

Here are some useful tips. It is advised that you take these precautionary measures from day 1 of your treatment, to reduce the risk of skin damage. Do not wait until the redness appears.



Tip 1: Washing



It is recommended that you wash the area of skin that has received radiation. This will help keep your skin in optimum condition throughout your treatment.

- Take a shower using a gentle jet.
- If you would prefer to take a bath, ensure that you are using a neutral soap, soap-free alternative or a gentle oil and use lukewarm water, not too hot.
- Do not rub the area with a flannel, use your hands to wash.
- Gently pat the skin dry, do not rub. Dry the folds of the skin with care.
- If using deodorant it may be easier to apply with a roll on so that you have more control over application, do not use on broken skin.
- Use an electric razor in the event of radiation to the throat, neck or arm pit. Do not use aftershave/perfumes if the skin is broken or sore.
- Always wash your hands before applying Flamigel®.

Tip 2:

Protecting and hydrating the skin

Flamigel® hydrates the affected skin area and restores moisture balance.



- Flamigel® provides a barrier against external contamination, moisturises and repairs the skin, and soothes pain.
- As with other measures, it is important to use Flamigel® **from day 1 of your treatment. Do not wait until the redness appears.**
- Flamigel® is suitable for dry, flaky skin. If the skin is weeping or broken speak to your Health Care Professional about alternative treatment.
- Flamigel® reduces the intensity of early symptoms of radiotherapy-induced skin reactions such as red, dry, itching, flaking, peeling or irritated skin (dry desquamation).
- Flamigel® helps to reduce pain, redness and heat by its cooling effect, and therefore soothes the exposed skin areas.

Tip 3: What to wear

✓ DO

- Wear clothes that you feel comfortable wearing, ensure they do not rub and cause friction as this can make skin reactions more likely.
- Wear clothes that allow your skin to breathe.
- If you choose to wear a bra, ensure it is soft and comfortable and does not rub or cause friction.
- If you are having radiation therapy to the pelvis area ensure that you wear soft and comfortable underwear and clothes that do not cause any friction.



✗ DO NOT

- Use adhesive plasters or dressings in the radiated area, these will be sore to remove.



Tip 4:

Avoid exposure to extreme temperatures

- Protect yourself from wind and cold.
- Cover the area of irradiated skin to avoid contact with direct sunlight.
- Do not apply bags of ice or a hot water bottle to the area of irradiated skin.
- Do not use a sauna or sunbed.
- If you would like to swim ensure that you shower thoroughly immediately after swimming to remove the chlorine, dry yourself and apply Flamigel® once dry.
DO NOT swim if you have broken or sore skin.



Once radiotherapy is complete

Once the radiotherapy is complete the skin reaction may remain visible for another 2 to 4 weeks.

It is recommended to continue all of the measures relating to bathing, clothing and skin care and exposure to extreme temperatures during the 2-4 weeks following radiotherapy.

Flamigel[®], clinically proven

Flamigel[®]:

- is a protective gel (not a moisturiser/emollient) which provides a protective barrier against external contamination.
- hydrates the affected skin area and restores moisture balance and reduces the intensity of early symptoms of radiotherapy-induced skin reactions such as red, dry, itching, flaking, peeling or irritated skin (dry desquamation).
- helps to continue the prescribed radiotherapy treatment by delaying the onset and reducing the incidence of radiotherapy-induced moist desquamation (RIMD).
- helps to reduce pain, redness and heat by its cooling effect and, therefore, soothes the exposed skin areas. Flamigel[®] helps to create optimal healing conditions to accelerate cell renewal, allowing the compromised skin to heal fast and therefore reduce the likelihood of scarring.

The effectiveness of Flamigel[®] has been demonstrated in multiple case reports and has been clinically proven.^{1,2}

1 Censabella S. et al. Retrospective study of radiotherapy induced skin reactions in breast cancer patients; reduced incidence of moist desquamation with a hydroactive colloid gel versus dexpanthenol. Eur J Oncol Nurs. 2014 Oct; 18(5):499-504.

2 Censabella S. et al. Efficacy of a hydroactive colloid gel versus historical controls for the prevention of radiotherapy-induced moist desquamation in breast cancer patients. Eur J Oncol Nurs. 2017 Aug; 29:1-7.

Care advice Flamigel®



- ✓ Creates optimal healing conditions to accelerate cell renewal
- ✓ Reduces redness and irritated skin
- ✓ Protects the skin
- ✓ Reduces pain
- ✓ Hydrates the skin and restores moisture balance
- ✓ Provides a barrier against contamination
- ✓ Cools the skin

Flamigel® helps to continue the prescribed radiotherapy treatment by delaying the onset and reducing the incidence of radiotherapy-induced moist desquamation (RIMD).

Care

Always ask your Health Care Professional's advice.

1



Clean

Clean the skin with clean water or with a specific wound cleanser if advised by your nurse or doctor.

2



Dry

Dry the skin gently with a clean towel by patting the skin.

3



Treat

Using your fingers apply liberally Flamigel® 3 times per day to the treated area. Use from day 1 of treatment.



Advice is based on the 'Radiotherapy Skin Reactions, information for patients' published 2020 by SCoR (The Society and College of Radiographers).

This publication is an adaptation of the 2018 patient pocket guide written by Dr Michèle Langendries and published by Roularta HealthCare. References to products from Flen Health are our own addition.

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