

Radiation Therapy to the Abdomen

You are scheduled to receive radiation treatments designed specifically for you. Your treatment plan will be:_____.

The following guidelines will help you take an active part in your radiation therapy.

What to Expect During Your Treatment

Stomach upset

You may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal cramping. Call your nurse or doctor if you have any of these symptoms. A diet may be recommended and medication may be prescribed to help minimize your discomfort.

- If you are taking prescribed medication for your nausea, take the medication 30 minutes to one hour before eating, and also before your radiation treatment.
- Before a radiation treatment, it may be helpful to eat foods that are easy to digest. Avoid fried, fatty, and highly seasoned spicy foods, which tend to upset the stomach. Some people are more comfortable when they do not eat two or three hours before treatment; some are more comfortable when they do not eat two or three hours after treatment. Find out what works best for you.
- Eat bland foods, such as toast, crackers, and applesauce.
- Avoid foods that are spicy and can irritate your esophagus and stomach; avoid juices and citrus, such as oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes, and tomatoes.
- Drink clear beverages, such as ginger ale, apple juice, or sports drinks. Beverages and foods should be served at room temperature. Limit intake of alcoholic beverages.
- Sip liquids throughout the day, rather than drinking large amounts at one time.

Appetite changes

You may notice changes in your appetite. Liquids and foods may not taste the same, and you may not feel as hungry.

- Eat bland foods that are low in fat because these are digested more easily.
- Avoid spicy foods that will irritate your stomach.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals, rather than three large meals a day.
- Ask to speak with the dietitian about your nutritional needs and for examples of a low-fat diet.

Fatigue

You may feel more tired than usual.

- Take frequent rest periods and pace your activities.
- Save time for activities you enjoy. Plan them as part of your day.
- Plan a short period of light activity each day, such as a walk. Being inactive may actually increase fatigue.
- Tell your nurse or doctor if you become extremely tired.

Skin reactions

Temporary skin reactions may occur. Usually these include redness, dryness, scaling, and itching of the treated area.

- Skin changes are expected and usually occur one to two weeks into your treatment. These changes may last for one to two weeks after your last treatment.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing over the treatment area, such as belts, girdles, or pantyhose.
- Do not use hot water bottles, heating pads, sun lamps, or ice packs in the treatment area.
- Avoid using saunas and hot tubs while you are undergoing treatment with radiation therapy
- Apply moisturizers to the treated area two to three times a day. Do not use moisturizers within two hours before your radiation treatment. Suggested moisturizers to use include: _____

Permanent skin changes include increased sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures. If the area being treated is exposed to the sun, apply sunscreen routinely to the treatment site whenever you are outdoors for more than 10 minutes during the summer or winter. A PABA-free sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 should be used. Since the area being treated will be more sensitive than the rest of your skin, protect the area from sun exposure after your treatment ends.

Things to Report to Your Nurse or Doctor

Tell your nurse or doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Nausea unrelieved by prescribed medication
- Red, swollen, or tender areas of skin
- Any new or unusual symptoms

Things to Report Immediately

Call **immediately** if you have any of the following symptoms:

- More than five watery stools in a 24-hour period
- Frequent vomiting for more than eight hours, or blood in your vomit
- Bloody, black, or tar-like stools
- Temperature of 100.5°F (38°C) or above
- Chills
- Unusual bleeding

In an Emergency Call:
