

Radiation Treatment

Special Instructions for Individuals with Pelvic Cancer

Follow these guidelines to help manage common side effects of radiation treatment to the pelvic and colorectal area. Your radiation team can give you more information. Please feel free to ask questions.

Instructions

Your first visit to the Radiation Treatment Center will be for a treatment planning session – called a simulation. X-rays may be taken of your pelvic area.

You will have a computerized tomography (CT) scan before your treatment to help plan the treatment. Depending on how long your course of treatment is, you may be tattooed with 3 small marks to help position you for treatment. Lines will be drawn on top of these, and tape will be applied to help you keep the lines. Be careful when you bath so that you do not rub off the lines. If the lines come off, call your radiation therapy nurse and therapist. They will arrange for the lines to be redrawn.

Dietary Issues

It is very important to eat a well-balanced diet so that you maintain weight during treatment. Include protein sources, such as beef, chicken, fish, cheese and eggs in your diet. You will be weighed each week when you see the doctor. If you start to lose weight or start to have diarrhea, ask to speak to a dietitian. A dietitian can help you manage your diet.

If you have a loss of appetite, please tell your nurse and begin taking your nausea medicine on a regular basis. Ask your nurse to speak to the dietitian.

Tell your nurse if you have abdominal cramping and diarrhea. These symptoms can be controlled through medicine and diet. If the diarrhea continues, tell your nurse so that he or she can arrange to have your medicine adjusted.

Skin Care

Your skin will be checked throughout your treatment. Tell your nurse if you develop soreness and/or irritation in your genital and/or rectal area. It may be helpful for you to take a 10 minute sitz bath 2-3 times a day. A sitz bath can help relieve discomfort in your genital and rectal areas. A special solution may be added to the sitz bath to help soothe your skin.

After each sitz bath, dry your genital and rectal area by gently patting the area with a soft towel or by using a hair dryer on a cool setting. Be careful not to wash off the colored lines (skin markings.) You will receive special ointments and lotions as needed. Do not use anything else on your skin without checking with your nurse. Make sure all ointments or creams are applied after your radiation treatment each day. They may be applied several times daily. You may need special skin dressings. If so, your nurse will teach you the proper way to use these.

Wear cotton underwear. Cotton does not hold in moisture in the treated area. Do not wear tight pants.

Tell your nurse if:

- You develop pain and soreness caused by hemorrhoids. Medicines are available to help relieve the discomfort.
- You feel burning or pain while urinating or if you have to urinate very often. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to manage these symptoms.

Reporting Problems

During your treatment, if you have any of the problems described above, don't wait for your weekly clinic visit. Ask your radiation therapist to contact your nurse.

After normal business hours, a doctor is available if you have problems. Call 1-844-632-2278 and ask for the radiation doctor on call.

Go to a Baptist Medical Center emergency room if you:

- have a fever greater than 100.4° Fahrenheit,
- are vomiting and cannot hold fluids down, or
- are in severe pain.

For non-emergencies during business hours, please call the Radiation Treatment Center at 1-844-632-2278.

Home Care Instructions

Problems that you had during treatment will last for at least two to three weeks after treatment is complete. If you have questions or if the problems become worse call your nurse or mid-level provider. Make sure you have enough medicine, creams and/or dressings to last 2-3 weeks.

After you have finished radiation treatment:

- Continue the sitz baths until the treated area is healed.
- Weigh yourself daily and keep a record of it. Share this with your nurse at your weekly doctor visits.
- Drink 8-10 cups of fluids per day.

- Take your prescribed medicines.

Report symptoms including:

- bleeding,
- pain,
- fever over 100.4°Fahrenheit (38.3°Celsius), or
- problems with urination, nausea or vomiting.

Resources

American Cancer Society

800-227-2345

www.cancer.org

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is a voluntary national health organization with local offices around the country. The ACS supports research, provides information about cancer, and offers many programs and services to patients and their families.

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov

The National Cancer Institute has valuable cancer-related health information for over 200 cancer types, clinical trials, cancer statistics, prevention, screening, treatment and news.

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