

## Radiation Treatment: Special Instructions for Gynecology Patients

This information will help you manage common side effects from radiation therapy. Your radiation treatment doctor, nurse or therapist can give you more information. If you have any questions, please ask your radiation team.

### Instructions During Treatment

- Do not rub or wash off the colored lines or radiation tattoos marked on your skin. To help preserve the marks, it is best to take showers and sponge baths. Do not take tub baths during the course of your radiation therapy.
- Wear loose cotton underwear and clothing. Cotton does not hold moisture in the treated area. Do not wear panty hose, girdles, or tight jeans, as these may hold in moisture and rub the treated skin.
- Practice Kegel exercises to help strengthen and tighten your pelvic muscles. Doing the exercises will also help to reduce urine leakage. Do this exercise two times a day or more often. Ask your provider how to correctly perform the exercises.
- If you need to go to the bathroom more often than usual and/or you have burning or discomfort while urinating, tell your nurse. Medicine can be prescribed to help with these symptoms. Try to drink at least 8-10 (8oz size) glasses of water each day.
- If you are having daily external beam radiation, you may engage in sexual activity if it is comfortable. You are not radioactive. There are no hazards to your partner from radioactivity or cancer. You must use birth control if you are sexually active and of childbearing age. If you are having brachytherapy, please talk to your physician prior to engaging in sexual activity.
- It is very important for you to eat well and to try to keep your weight at a healthy level that is right for you during treatment. Include good protein sources in your diet such as beef, chicken, fish, cheese, and eggs. You will be weighed weekly when you see your doctor. If you start to lose weight, ask to see your dietician or one may be recommended for you.
- If you have abdominal cramping and/or diarrhea, tell your nurse. It is important to control these symptoms with medicine and diet. Your doctor can change your medicine if diarrhea continues.

**During your treatment contact your nurse or mid-level provider**, if you have any of the problems described above, do not wait for your weekly clinic visit.

### Home Care Instructions

- You may have vaginal discharge with or without slight bleeding for 4-6 weeks after your treatment. If this does not resolve on its own or it is prolonged, please tell your nurse or doctor.

- You may slowly return to your regular diet over the next two to three weeks. If diarrhea continues to be a problem, stay on your diet plan and keep taking the medicine that was prescribed as needed. If diarrhea continues for more than four weeks after your treatment, tell your nurse.

**Tell your nurse if you have:**

- Continued nausea or vomiting
  - Continued weight loss
  - Unusual problems with urination or bowel movements
  - Bleeding
  - A fever over 100.4° F
  - Unusual pain
- Keep doing the Kegel exercises until your first return appointment. At that time, ask your doctor if you should keep doing the exercises.
  - Your vaginal may shorten and narrow due to the radiation treatment you received. To help keep it from becoming too narrow, you will need to use a vaginal dilator. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information. This is important so that your pelvic exams and intercourse do not become uncomfortable. If you are sexually active, having intercourse as often as you desire may help keep the vagina from becoming too narrow.
  - The radiation will reduce the natural lubrication in your vagina. When using a vaginal dilator, and if you have sexual intercourse, you will need to use a water-soluble lubricant for your comfort and to prevent irritation. Water-soluble lubricants include Astroglide®, Comfort®, Replens®, or K-Y® Jelly and can be bought at any drugstore.

## Follow-up After Treatment

If you received brachytherapy, you will have an appointment with your radiation doctor or your gynecology doctor within 4-6 weeks after treatment. Depending on your doctor, your appointment may be earlier. You may have lab tests at this time and may also have imaging scans. If you had External Beam radiation, you will follow up with your doctor usually within 4 weeks of completing your therapy. Please let your nurse or doctor know if you need to be seen sooner.