

Pelvis Radiation Treatment Side Effects

Common side effects of radiation to the pelvic area include:

- Diarrhea and rectal discomfort
- Urinary changes
- Skin changes
- Hair loss
- Appetite loss
- Fatigue

Diarrhea and Rectal Discomfort

Patients often develop diarrhea within the first few weeks after treatment begins. Cramping, pressure and discomfort in the rectal area are also common. You may also feel the need to strain to have a bowel movement with no results.

Urinary Changes

The lining of your bladder may become irritated during treatment. About 2 weeks after starting treatment, you may need to urinate frequently and have a burning sensation when urinating. You may also feel an urgent need to urinate.

Skin Changes

During radiation, it is normal for the skin in the treated area to change. After 2 to 3 weeks, your skin may become pink or tanned. It may even become bright red or very dark later. Your skin may feel dry and itchy and may become flaky. Sometimes, the skin in sensitive areas such as the vagina, groin, testicles, penis, or scrotum, may blister, open and peel. If this happens, tell your doctor or nurse.

Hair Loss

You may lose some or all of the hair in your pubic area. This hair usually grows back 2 to 4 months after treatment ends.

Appetite Loss

Some patients lose their appetite during radiation treatment. You might find it helpful to eat smaller meals throughout the day instead of 3 large meals. Drinking liquid nutrition supplement drinks, adds calories and protein to your diet, which help maintain your weight. Examples are Boost® and Ensure®. Your care team can refer you to a dietitian who can give you eating tips and other information.

Fatigue

You may feel more tired than usual. Fatigue is a feeling of being tired or weak, not being able to concentrate or lacking energy. This is very common. You may develop fatigue after 2 to 3 weeks of treatment, and it can range from mild to severe. Fatigue gradually improves after treatment ends but can last for several months.

Tell your care team about all the side effects you have.