



# Treatment Guidelines

## Colorectal

The information that you find here is to help you to know what to expect during your treatment. It also helps you to learn ways to deal with any side effects that you may have. Please ask a member of the team (doctor, nurse, technologist and nutritionist) to answer any of your questions.

### Introduction

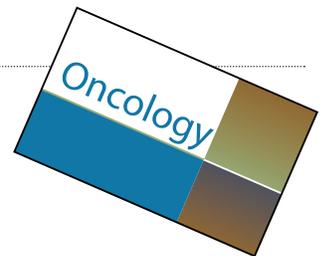
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Radiation therapy side effects vary from person to person. The side effects depend on several things such as the area of the body to be treated, the type of radiation used, the amount of radiation, whether you are having chemotherapy at the same time and your general health.

### Oncology Passport

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This is your tool to write information and keep track about your diagnosis, treatment, possible symptoms and resources. Please bring it with you everyday.



### Treatment Set Up

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- The technologist may apply ink “markings” on your skin for your treatments.

### Will the radiation therapy affect my skin?

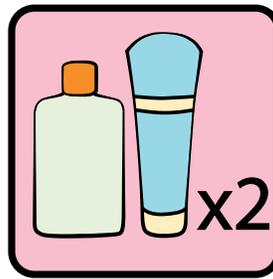
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- When radiation is given it passes through the skin to reach the area to be treated. Skin problems are an expected side effect for people who receive radiation therapy. The skin might become dry, itchy, red or darker in color.
- Skin reactions to radiation occur within the treatment field and begin to appear after 2 to 4 weeks.
- Advise the technologist if you notice any skin itching, tenderness, redness or breakdown.

## How should I care for my skin during treatment?

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- Use a Sitz bath with only lukewarm water 4 times daily for 10 – 15 minutes during treatments.
- Take quick showers or baths.
- Wash the skin gently with lukewarm water and mild unscented soap such as Ivory® or Dove®.
- Lather your hands with soap and apply gently your skin.
- Rinse your skin well and pat dry with a soft towel.
- Twice daily apply unscented lotion such as Lubriderm® or Aveeno® or Lipikar®.
- Do not apply cream or lotion on skin even if the doctor prescribed it for at least 4 hours before treatment.
- Apply cool compresses for 10 to 15 minutes 4 times a day to relieve itching or burning.



## What should I avoid doing to my skin during treatment?

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- Do not wash off the skin markings.
- Do not use tape on the area of body treated.
- Do not rub, scrub or scratch your skin.
- Avoid use of heating pads, hot water bottles, hot tubs, or ice packs.
- Avoid tight, restrictive clothing.
- Discuss swimming and going in hot tubs with your radiation oncologist.

## What are the possible side effects?

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### Diarrhea

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- Frequent bowel movements or diarrhea (watery stools) or gas.
- Diarrhea most often begins a few weeks after starting radiation therapy.
- Your doctor may prescribe medicine or give you special instruction to help with this side effect.

### Urinary changes

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Report to your team any changes in the way that you pass urine.

## Bloating

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- Bloating of the abdomen also called abdominal distention, cramps, pressure or discomfort in rectal area.
- Cramps and pressure in your abdomen may make your abdomen feel bloated and uncomfortable.
- A nutritionist is available to meet with you to review the types of food to take and to teach you about a low residue diet.

## Fertility and sexuality

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- Women of childbearing age are advised to avoid getting pregnant during radiotherapy.
- You should discuss with your doctor how radiation might affect your fertility.
- If you have concerns about your sexual life during treatment please discuss this with your radiation oncologist.



## Will I feel tired?

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- Fatigue or a feeling of tiredness is a common side effect.
- Energy levels increase gradually after the treatment ends.
- If you are tired, then take naps or rest periods as needed.
- Continue your regular activities but limit yourself when you feel tired. Listen to your body.
- Have a friend or family member come with you for support and to assist with driving and daily activities.
- Mild physical activity such as walking is encouraged and may be helpful to fight fatigue.
- Fatigue is also common among persons who are depressed or have difficulty to cope. Talk to your treatment team.



## What can I do if I feel overwhelmed?

- Feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, or of difficulty to cope are normal. Each person has a different way of dealing with difficult situations. Tell the team if you are having any of these feelings.
- We can offer you counseling with our Psychosocial Oncology Program.
- We can also offer information and/or referral for support, such as Can Support at MUHC or community based self-help groups.

## Where can I get information on the Internet?

Not all information found on the Internet is accurate or reliable. If you have access to the Internet and you would like more information on your cancer or its treatment, you can visit these reliable websites:

[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) - Canadian Cancer Society

[www.fqc.qc.ca](http://www.fqc.qc.ca) - Fondation Québécoise du Cancer

[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net) - American Society of Clinical Oncology

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) - National Cancer Institute



## What should I do if I feel very sick or if there is an emergency?

Should you experience any serious reactions that are causing you to worry, please call your doctor or nurse

- Weekdays - tel: 514-934-1934 ext. 43400.
- At night or during the weekend: call the MUHC switchboard - tel: 514- 934-1934 and ask for the Radiation Oncology Resident on Call.
- If your symptoms are particularly severe or you are unable to reach the Radiation Oncologist you should go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.

### IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

**Information provided by pamphlet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.**

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