

## **INTRODUCTION**

Your Radiation Oncologist has decided that you would benefit from a course of Radiation Therapy to the abdominal area, this treatment will be designed specifically for you.

This leaflet has been designed to give information and advice to help you understand the side effects that you may experience during this treatment. While your Radiation Therapy is designed to minimise side effects as much as possible, we want to warn you about potential side effects at the outset, so that you are not alarmed if/when they develop.

Radiation Therapy is a form of treatment that affects only a very specific part of the body, the area being treated. The side effects it causes will be limited to this area as well.

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## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING TREATMENT?**

Remember! Everyone is different and not everyone will experience reactions.

### **Stomach Upset:**

You may experience queasiness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, or abdominal cramping. This is quite common when having Radiation Therapy to the abdomen, this is because the tissues that make up the gastro-intestinal tract are very sensitive to radiation.

Inform your Radiation Therapist, Nurse or Radiation Oncologist if you have any of these symptoms, anti-Nausea or anti-diarrhoea medication can be prescribed for you to help minimize your discomfort.

Some patients feel nauseous for several hours after each treatment: you may find that having your treatment on an empty

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### **Appetite Changes:**

You may notice changes in your appetite. Liquids and foods may not taste the same, and you may not feel as hungry. While reduced appetite is normal, it is important that you keep your strength up and take in plenty of fluids to avoid becoming dehydrated.

### **Temporary Skin Changes:**

Temporary skin changes within the treated area may occur. Usually these include redness, dryness, scaling, and itching of the treated area. Skin changes usually occur one to two weeks after your treatment begins and may last for a few weeks after your last treatment. Please follow the advice in our Information leaflet on Skin Care during Radiation Therapy.

### **Fatigue/Tiredness:**

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Radiation Therapy to the abdomen may be recommended for patients with cancers of the stomach, oesophagus or pancreas (in which cases concurrent chemotherapy may be given which can worsen some of the effects discussed here). Treatment to the para-aortic nodes and mid to lower spine area can cause the side effects discussed in this leaflet also.

stomach and avoiding food for 1 – 2 hours afterwards may help.

Some tips that can help avoid or reduce these effects include:

- Eat bland foods that are low in fat because these are digested more easily.
- Avoid spicy foods that will irritate your stomach.
- Eat several small meals a day.
- Eat and drink slowly.

Rest when possible. Follow the advice in our Information Leaflet on Fatigue.

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**All the side effects relevant to your Radiation Therapy will be fully discussed with you before your treatment begins.**

**If you have any questions or problems at any time during your treatment, bring them to the attention of anyone on your radiation therapy treatment team – they are the best people to advise and help you.**

## **RADIATION THERAPY TO THE ABDOMEN**



### **USEFUL INFORMATION**

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