

INTRODUCTION

Your Radiation Oncologist has decided that you would benefit from a course of Radiation Therapy to the head and neck 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.

Temporary Skin Changes:

Temporary skin changes may occur in the treated area. Usually these changes include redness, dryness, scaling, and itchiness. These skin changes usually occur one to two weeks after treatment begins and may last one to two weeks after your last treatment.

During this time:

- You may shave the area, but only with electric shavers. Do not use pre-shave or after-shave lotions. Try not to shave every day; try every other day at first. As treatment progresses, you will find that you do not need to shave as often as you usually do, as the Radiation Therapy will slow down hair growth in the treatment area.
- You should not apply makeup in the treatment area.
- Avoid using any moisturisers, creams or lotions in the treated area.
- Wear soft, loose-fitting shirts with

dislike for certain foods. These changes may even last for a time after your Radiation Therapy finishes.

Hair Loss:

The amount of hair lost will depend on the size of the area being treated and will only happen in the part of the face, neck or base of skull being treated. Your Radiation Therapist can inform you where any hair loss will occur.

The hair will not fall out until you are well into your Radiation Therapy treatment, or it may even fall out when the course of Radiation Therapy is complete.

Diet and Eating Difficulties:

- Eating may become more difficult during your treatments. Weight loss may occur, but it is important that you try to maintain your weight by following the

It is important that you inform your Radiation Therapist, Nurse or Doctor if you have any of these symptoms, as medication can be prescribed for you to help minimize your discomfort.

One of the most important issues when having Radiation Therapy to the mouth or neck is oral hygiene. Please follow all the advice in our separate information leaflet on Mouth Care.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING TREATMENT?

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

open collars to prevent skin irritation.

Permanent Skin Changes:

Permanent skin changes include increased sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures. Since the area being treated will always be more sensitive than the rest of your skin, protect the area from sun exposure after your treatment ends.

Taste Changes:

You may experience changes in your sensation of taste while having Radiation Therapy. For example, food may taste more bitter or be tasteless altogether. You may also find that you develop a

advice below: A dietician is available to discuss any concerns about your diet.

- Maintain an adequate diet. Eat small amounts of food more often, rather than three large meals a day, to avoid feeling bloated.
 - Avoid drinking alcohol. You may have an occasional glass of wine spritzer or stout, but please avoid spirits.
 - Eat foods that are easy to chew and swallow, such as pudding, cheese and other dairy products, or other soft foods.
 - Cut foods into small pieces or puree your food in a blender to make swallowing easier. Adding sauces and gravies to foods may also help.
-

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 team – they are the best people to advise and help you.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address: UPMC Whitfield Cancer Centre,
Cork Road, Co. Waterford

Telephone: 051337444

Website: UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie