

INTRODUCTION

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

Your Radiation Therapists will advise you if there is anything that you need to do to prepare for your Radiation Therapy. In some instances a full bladder or empty bladder may be required. In most instances for Radiation Therapy to the pelvis no treatment preparation is necessary.

Temporary Skin Changes:

Temporary skin changes within the treated area, particularly around the back passage, may occur. Usually these include redness, dryness, scaling, and itching of the 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. Wear loose cotton clothing next to the skin and avoid wearing tights.

drink because of another medical condition. This should be continued for two or three weeks after your last treatment. Avoid drinking liquids in the evening and before bedtime, so you can rest comfortably at night. Alcoholic beverages and beverages containing caffeine may irritate your bladder. Let us know if you are experiencing this problem as your Doctor may prescribe medication to alkalinize your urine which will minimise the discomfort.

Bowel changes such as Cramping, Diarrhea, Constipation:

Radiation Therapy can irritate the rectum (back passage) and cause discomfort and more frequent bowel movements (diarrhoea).

- Loose, frequent bowel movements may occur a few weeks into treatment.
- A low-residue (low fibre) diet may be suggested for you to follow throughout

Radiation Therapy to the pelvis is commonly given to patients with gynaecological cancers or cancers of the rectum, anal canal and colon. It is often given in conjunction with chemotherapy which can exacerbate the side effects discussed here.

It is important that you inform your treatment team if you have any of these symptoms, as medication can be prescribed for you to help minimise your discomfort.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING TREATMENT?

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

Hair Loss:

You may lose some hair in the pubic region, this is entirely normal if it happens. It is usually temporary and the hair will start to grow back within a few months of completing your treatment.

Urinary Changes:

Difficulty urinating (passing water), or urinating more often than usual (particularly at night), may occur a few weeks into your treatment. These symptoms are caused by cystitis brought on by your Radiation Therapy.

Drink at least six to eight glasses of water daily throughout your Radiation Therapy, unless your Doctor has restricted the amount of fluids you can

your Radiation Therapy to control side effects of treatment.

- Eat small frequent meals instead of three large meals a day.
- Avoid very hot or cold food and drinks.
- Ask your Doctor or Nurse to suggest medications or products you may use to help relieve the discomfort of your irritated rectal area. Your Doctor may prescribe medications that decrease the frequency of bowel movements.

Sexual Concerns:

Radiation Therapy in the pelvis area can cause the vagina to become dry or irritated and more narrow. Your Doctor may recommend the use of a lubricant

and/or vaginal dilator for you. Radiation Therapy to the pelvis may also affect your fertility, either temporarily or permanently. If you have any concerns, please talk to the Nurse or Doctor, who can help put you at your ease.

You must ensure that you do not become pregnant during treatment as radiation will damage an unborn foetus.

Fatigue/Tiredness:

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

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,

Please use this space for questions and notes.

RADIATION THERAPY TO THE FEMALE PELVIS



USEFUL INFORMATION

Address: UPMC Whitfield Cancer Centre,

**bring them to the attention of anyone
on your radiation therapy treatment
team – they are the best people to
advise and help you.**

Cork Road, Co. Waterford

Telephone: 051337444

Website: UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie