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# Cleaning your wound during and after radiotherapy

**Radiotherapy can sometimes cause skin reactions that require specialist care and cleaning, or your cancer itself might require this. This step-by-step guide will help you to care for your wound at home with the on-going support of the Review Radiographer Team.**

1. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly. Unwashed hands carry pathogens (disease-producing viruses, bacteria, or other microorganisms) that could potentially cause an infection.
2. Rinse the wound under the shower or tap, first using plain water (no wash products) and making sure the water temperature is cool. This will remove any bacteria or debris from the wound.
3. Moisten a gauze pad or cloth with plain water, wringing out excess wetness (do not use cotton wool, as fibres can become stuck to the wound). Do not use antiseptic ointments or sprays as this may damage the skin.
4. Apply the gauze to the skin, starting in the area where the skin is broken. Gently sweep across the wound to the area where the skin is intact, moving outwards. A new gauze/pad should be used for each wipe so make sure you have plenty to hand.
5. Do not be alarmed if you see yellow staining on the gauze pad/cloth; this is your body's normal reaction to an open wound. If you notice an offensive odour, a greenish discharge, bleeding, or if the wound feels hot to touch and you feel unwell, continue to clean the wound as above, but seek advice from a member of the Radiotherapy Review Team. Do this either by calling 0118 322 8869, or if you are due to attend the Radiotherapy Department that day, tell them in person.
6. **Once the skin has broken, you should not apply moisturising cream to that broken area.** As a consequence of this, the area can become dry, feel tight and uncomfortable and a scab might form. A member of the Radiotherapy Team may give you some gel to apply to the broken or scabbed area to help keep the wound moist and more comfortable. You can continue to apply moisturising cream to areas of skin that are intact (i.e. not blistered, peeling or leaking a fluid).
7. To apply the gel, clean your hands thoroughly, squeeze some gel onto a clean finger and apply a thin layer to the area of broken skin, or to where there are scabs, ulceration or open blisters. This should be done **after** cleaning the area.
8. When you want to apply more gel, follow the steps above and very gently clean off the previous gel with wet gauze before applying a new layer of gel. Do this 2-3 times a day.

## Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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