

Radiotherapy to the skin on the Superficial Treatment Unit

This leaflet explains how to care for your skin during radiotherapy treatment on the Superficial Treatment Unit. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your radiographer.

Advice during and following treatment

Each appointment will take approximately 15 minutes.

To treat your skin with radiotherapy, part of our treatment machine will rest very lightly against your skin but will not hurt you.

Radiotherapy to the skin has very few side effects. Towards the end of the course of treatment the area will become red, rather like sunburn. It may become itchy or sore and can get worse in the week or two after you have finished treatment. Commonly, people develop a significant scab over the treated area a week or two after treatment has finished that can then take several weeks to come off. If the nose has been treated there is often also some scabbing and minor bleeding from inside the nose that also takes some weeks to heal.

During your treatment course, and until the skin has healed afterwards, we offer the following advice:

- Wash around the area gently, using either unscented or baby soap, and blot dry with a soft towel. Do not rub.
- If the area is in the hair, use lukewarm water and baby shampoo. Do not use hair dryers or strong hair products. If you have to shave around the area, please dry shave with an electric razor taking great care.
- Wear loose clothing around the area being treated, keeping the area dry and uncovered. If you need to use a dressing, use a dry dressing rather than a sticky plaster.
- Do not use any creams, ointments or make up on the treated area. A moisturising cream may be used around the treated area. Do not subject the area to any extremes of temperature e.g. strong heat or ice packs for at least 12 months after finishing radiotherapy.
- The area treated will always be more prone to sunburn than the rest of your skin. If you go out in the sun, keep the area covered or use a total sun block.

The healing process: what to expect

Typically, the skin we are treating may take several weeks to recover after the radiotherapy course. Some areas can be slower and take a few months to heal completely. There is often pus or a little blood produced by the healing process; this is normal and it will dry out to form a crust which will come away and a new crust may form in its place. This process can be repeated a number of times before healing is complete. If any redness extends beyond the area we have treated you should seek further advice from the radiotherapy department by contacting 0118 322 8869 and leaving a message on our answerphone. We will get back to you as soon as is possible.

Every person we see is treated as an individual, with treatment tailored to meet your particular needs. You will be given the opportunity to discuss your individual treatment with the consultant.

A follow-up appointment will be organised for you for 8-10 weeks after your treatment is completed and this will be sent to you by post. If you haven't received an appointment after 10 weeks please contact 0118 322 7271.

If you have any worries about your skin during or after your treatment please speak to a radiotherapy radiographer or you may wish to see your own GP.

Contact us

Your oncology consultant is:

You will be able to see him/her at your follow-up appointment, which will be posted to you at home.

The radiotherapy radiographer treating you will be:

You can contact him / her directly on 0118 322 8869.

More information

For more information about the Trust visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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