



The Christie **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Department of radiotherapy**

# **Skin care during and after your radiotherapy to the perineal area**



## **How long do these skin changes last?**

These skin changes may continue for a time after treatment has finished. This varies depending on the type of treatment you are receiving.

We advise you to continue to follow the skin care guidelines in this leaflet. Afterwards, you can begin to use your normal toiletries. You will need to protect the skin in this area from the sun by using a sunblock cream. It is best never to expose the treated area to the sun or use sun beds.

You may notice a slight change to the colour of your skin in the treated area. Sometimes treatment can result in permanent skin changes that may occur some time after your treatment has finished.

If you have any worries before, during or following your treatment about skin changes please talk to your doctor, nurse or radiographer.

The following information and advice will help you to look after your skin both during and after radiotherapy, and reduce further problems. The skin in the area where you are having radiotherapy may be affected by your treatment.

## **How your skin might be affected**

Your skin may:

- feel warm to touch
- be more sensitive or feel sore
- become pinker than normal  
(this is not so obvious on darker skin)
- become dry and flaky
- feel itchy or prickly
- peel and weep
- have a burning sensation.

## **When will these skin changes occur?**

This varies, but the changes mentioned above usually occur later on in your treatment, and sometimes when treatment has finished and for a week or two afterwards.

## **Will I experience all the changes described?**

Not always. Each person's skin reacts to radiotherapy in a different way. There are also other factors such as skin sensitivity and which area of the body is being treated.

Some people having radiotherapy will not be aware of any skin changes, whilst other people may have some or all of the side effects described.

## How you can help

### Caring for your skin

- As much as possible allow the air to get to the area being treated. For example, when you are at home this may give you the opportunity to remove your underwear and pads.
- Wash the treated area gently with warm water or an emollient such as Aqueous cream. Showers are preferable to baths.
- Dry the skin using a soft towel or a hairdryer on a cool setting.
- Do not apply toiletries such as perfume, talcum powder, deodorants etc on the skin that is being treated.
- It is possible to use some creams or lotions on treated skin, but only on advice from your doctor, nurse or radiographer. If your skin is itchy or sore, we can give you some cream to help.
- Do not wax, use depilatory creams or shave in the treatment area as this can irritate the skin.
- It is important not to stick dressing tape on to treated skin. Ask the advice of your doctor, nurse or radiographer if you wear a dressing on the treated area.
- Please tell the staff if you are having any discharge from the treated area, as there may be a risk of infection.
- If urine is splashing on your sore skin try sitting in different positions on the toilet. It may help to use a clean jug filled with warm water to cleanse the area as you pass urine and then pat dry afterwards.
- When using the toilet only use a soft toilet paper. If it feels sore when you use toilet paper, then try a clean, dry flannel or soft towel. Pat dry and use a fresh clean one each day.
- Often walking around makes the skin more sore as it rubs against itself, so you may find you have to rest a lot on the bed allowing the air to get to the sore areas.

## Clothing

- Avoid wearing tight restrictive clothing against treated skin, or clothing that will constantly rub the area. Make sure that underwear is loose-fitting, or avoid wearing any altogether.
- Natural fibres such as cotton are preferable to man-made fibres such as nylon. Cotton allows perspiration to evaporate more effectively, causes less friction and is therefore generally more comfortable.
- Avoid wearing tights and support undergarments.
- Avoid wearing sanitary towels, panty liners and incontinence pads. If it is essential for you to wear any of these please ask for advice about the most suitable products.

## How we can help

- If you are having treatment either as an inpatient or out patient your treatment area will be assessed on a regular basis.
- Occasionally patients benefit from coming into hospital to be supported and nursed through the worst of their skin reaction.
- If you are coming for treatment as an outpatient and start to feel that you are not coping please let the radiographer, nurse or doctor looking after you know and then they will be able to discuss the options with you.