

When treatment finishes

Skin reactions can develop or get worse when treatment is completed. It is important to follow this skin care advice for at least 2 to 3 weeks following treatment or until the reaction has settled. If you are concerned about your skin reaction please contact your treating team. During normal working hours (9-5pm), this may be your specialist radiographer/nurse or doctor. The details of your treating team can be found in your site specific radiotherapy booklet (i.e. 'Radiotherapy for cancer').

- For patients treated at Oldham please contact the review team:
0161 918 7700
- For patients treated at Salford please contact the review team:
0161 918 7800

If you have any questions or have other concerns, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff. If outside of normal working hours (9-5pm) call the 24-hour Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Department of radiotherapy Skin care during and after your radiotherapy treatment

This leaflet tells you about the effect radiotherapy can have on your skin. It gives you general skin care advice to help relieve the symptoms caused by a skin reaction.

Radiation affects all cells within the area being treated. When you have a course of radiotherapy you may notice that the skin in the treated area becomes more sensitive. It is possible to develop a pink to reddish colouring of the skin, or patches may be darker if you have a darker skin type.

Your skin may also feel tighter than usual and warm to the touch. This reaction is similar to the effect that sun exposure has on your skin. Dependent on the area being treated and the total dose, skin in the treated area may become blistered or broken either during the treatment course or in the weeks after its completion. The skin will heal but this can take several weeks. Your treating team will help you to manage this.

The extent of this reaction can vary. It also depends on factors such as your skin's sensitivity and the area being treated, alongside other treatments you are having such as chemotherapy. Skin reactions do not occur immediately; they develop gradually as your treatment progresses. The radiographers on the treatment suite will



monitor and give you advice to help manage any skin reaction.

We recommend that you follow the advice below from the beginning of your treatment. This advice only applies to the specific area being treated. If you are unsure, please ask the radiographer on your treatment machine.

If you need specific advice relating to the area where you are having treatment, the radiographer will give this to you on the first day of your radiotherapy treatment.

Advice on skin care

Showering and bathing: Wash the treated area with warm water; continue to use shower/bath products as normal. If preferred, you can use aqueous cream as a wash product, but this is unlikely to reduce the chance of a skin reaction occurring.

If you find that your skin is irritated following the use of a product, it is advisable to stop using that product for the time being. Pat the area dry with a soft towel.

Creams and lotions: It is advisable to moisturise the skin during radiotherapy treatment. You can continue to use your normal daily moisturiser. You do not need to change from this unless you find that it starts to irritate your skin during your treatment.

If you don't normally use a moisturiser, please visit your local pharmacy or speak to your treating team for help finding a suitable product for you. We recommend that you avoid using moisturising products on the treated skin containing the ingredient 'sodium lauryl sulfate' as this can irritate the skin. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask a member of your treating team to for further advice.

If your skin becomes blistered or broken during treatment, you may be recommended to stop using the moisturising cream or lotion in that area.

Deodorants, perfumes and aftershave, talcum powder: You can continue to use these products as normal, but please stop using them in the treated area if you find they irritate your skin.

Hair removal: Use an electric razor if possible. Try to avoid wet shaving, using wax or hair-removal creams, especially if your skin becomes irritated.

Clothing: Loose natural fibre clothing such as cotton or silk may be more comfortable and prevent irritation.

Swimming: The chlorinated water in a swimming pool may have a drying effect on the skin. After swimming, please shower to help remove the chlorine, and moisturise the area. Monitor how the skin reacts after swimming and please stop swimming if the skin becomes broken until it is healed.

Heat cold: Do not apply hot water bottles or ice packs to the area being treated.

Sun exposure: During your treatment course, and until any skin reaction has settled, cover the treatment area when outside in the sun or in cold and windy conditions. We recommend using a total sun block for at least a year after treatment has completed.

Tape and dressings: Do not use adhesive tape or adhesive dressings on the treated area. Please speak to your treating team.

If you are having radiotherapy to your head

Shampoo as normal, massaging the scalp gently. Pat the hair with a towel before leaving to dry. If you need to use a hairdryer, use the coolest setting. We advise you not to have your hair permed or coloured whilst on treatment as this can irritate your scalp. We recommend that you have a patch test before colouring or perming your hair in the future.