

Radiotherapy department

Skin care advice following radiotherapy treatment to the breast or chest wall, and/or the lymph nodes

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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. 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



Skin reactions following radiotherapy are usually at their worst around 10 to 14 days after treatment. Your skin should then start to heal, and is often much better within 4 to 6 weeks after treatment.

Now that you have finished your radiotherapy, **continue to moisturise** using the moisturiser you used throughout treatment. If you have not been using one, start to use a moisturiser that is unperfumed and suits your skin. If you have a new moisturiser, test it on the back of your hand first to make sure you do not have a reaction to it.

If your skin becomes itchy you can buy **1% hydrocortisone cream** from your local chemist. Use a small amount, twice a day, on the area that is affected. Only use it for a maximum of 14 days. Continue to moisturise the rest of your breast or chest wall with your regular moisturiser.

Take paracetamol or an anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin or ibuprofen can help to relieve any discomfort from the skin reaction.

Some patients may experience **moist desquamation**. This is when your skin blisters and peels, and you can see fresh skin underneath. It can sometimes appear 'sticky' with a green/yellowish fluid. This is a normal reaction after radiotherapy.

If moist desquamation happens:

- avoid moisturising the area
- keep the area clean. Wash with lukewarm water and pat it dry with a soft clean towel. If there is a layer of greenish/yellowish fluid avoid cleaning this away as it helps with the healing process
- allow as much air to the area as possible. Try to wear loose clothing and no bra when possible
- if the moist desquamation is under your breast, for temporary relief you can place a folded handkerchief there. To avoid this sticking to your skin, make sure the handkerchief is made from natural fibres such as 100% silk or cotton
- use Flaminal® Hydro/Forte (a cream wound dressing) on its own or with a non-stick foam dressing
- do not use dressings with sticky edges

- we recommend PolyMem® which contain a gentle wound cleanser and a soothing moisteriser
- if using PolyMem® dressing, you do not need to use Flaminal® Hydro/Forte
- if you need any further dressing after you have finished treatment at The Christie, please contact your GP or healthcare provider

If you need extra support, speak to your GP and take this leaflet with you.

Occasionally an infection can occur. Signs of infection include:

- swelling, redness and increasing pain in the affected area
- pus (discharge) forming in or around the wound
- feeling generally unwell
- a high temperature (fever) of 37.5°C or above.

If you think you may have an infection, contact your GP for advice. They may want to examine the area, take a swab, and decide if you need antibiotics.

Contacts

For further advice or support please contact the radiotherapy team where you were treated:

The Christie main site in Withington - **0161 956 1187**

The Christie at Oldham - **0161 918 7700**

The Christie at Salford - **0161 918 7800**

The Christie at Macclesfield - **0161 956 1700**

Proton beam therapy centre - **0161 918 7273**

For out of hours or urgent advice, please contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).