

Radiotherapy department

## **Post radiotherapy skin care advice for breast or chest wall treatments, 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](mailto:the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net)**

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



Now that you have completed your radiotherapy **continue to moisturise** using the moisturiser you used throughout treatment. If you have not yet used a moisturiser start using an unperfumed one which you know your skin agrees with. 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 and use it sparingly on the area that is affected. Please read the information leaflet or ask your pharmacist to check you are able to use it and inform you how to apply the cream. Continue to moisturise the rest of your breast or chest wall with your regular moisturiser.

Some patients may experience **moist desquamation**. This is when your **skin breaks down** and you can see fresh skin underneath. It can sometimes appear 'sticky' with a green/yellowish exudate (fluid).

- **Avoid moisturising** the broken down 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 broken down area** as possible. Try to wear **loose clothing and no bra** when possible.
- If you have a handkerchief made from a natural fibre such as 100% silk or cotton you can fold this under your breast, if this is where the moist desquamation is, for temporary relief.

The moist desquamation can take a few days to weeks to settle down, however if you feel that the above advice is not sufficient you can contact your GP and ask for a prescription for an absorbent **non-adhesive dressing or silicone-based only dressing** such as PolyMem® or Kliniderm® to prevent further trauma and promote healing. You can take this leaflet with you to help inform the GP.

Radiotherapy skin reactions usually peak around 10 - 14 days after treatment, when your skin should start to heal and should have significantly improved 4 - 6 weeks after treatment.

You can also take **paracetamol or an anti-inflammatory** such as aspirin or ibuprofen to **help relieve any discomfort** from the skin reaction.

**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 are concerned that you have an infection please contact your GP for a review.**

For further advice or support please contact the appropriate review team:

The Christie at Withington - **0161 956 1187**  
The Christie at Oldham - **0161 918 7700**  
The Christie at Salford - **0161 918 7800**

For queries out of hours: If you have problems related to your treatment, please contact The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**.