Skin care after your radiotherapy

Information for patients, carers and healthcare professionals
This leaflet will help you care for your skin once your course of radiotherapy treatment has finished.

**What to expect**

The side-effects of radiotherapy can continue after the end of treatment. Your skin reaction may be at its worst 10-14 days after your treatment finishes. Some patients may experience a skin reaction later than this which is quite normal.

**Your skin may:**

- Become redder (erythema). If you have dark skin it may become deeper in colour.
- Become dry and flaky.
- Become broken, peel and weep (moist desquamation).

Please follow the skin care advice given to you by your radiographers or nurses. This advice is individual to your needs.

**If your skin becomes broken:**

- **STOP** using all creams in the broken area.
- Special dressings should be applied to the area (see over).
- Remove the dressing when showering.
- Do not rub the affected area, pat dry with a soft towel.

You can still wash unbroken skin using normal un-perfumed products. The area of skin that is broken will have a yellow/green discharge. *This is normal and helps your skin heal.* Special dressings are needed as they will not stick to the broken skin. Only use the dressings recommended over the page. The dressings can be prescribed by your GP and collected from your local chemist.
When the broken skin is no longer moist, stop using the dressings.

If your skin is itchy or irritated Actiform cool dressings can be applied for short term relief. These dressings will work best if they are removed and reapplied once they have warmed up on the skin, about every 10-15 minutes.

- Do not place them in the fridge as this will damage them.
- Please dispose of after 24 hours or sooner if they become hard/brittle.

Once your skin is healed

Some patients experience dry skin after radiotherapy which can persist afterwards. Products such as Diprobase and Cetraban are useful options to help with dry skin and can be bought or prescribed. When you first use any new lotion or cream if your skin becomes irritated, stop using them and seek advice.

Your skin and the sun

Skin that has received radiotherapy is very sensitive to sunlight. If you are going to be out in the sun you should use a complete sun-block (Factor 50 SPF or higher with a minimum 4*) on the treated area. Also keep your skin covered with clothes or a hat as appropriate. Some clothing does not offer enough protection against the sun. If the material has an open weave or you are unsure, it is best to apply a sun-block underneath as well. It is advisable to follow the sun protection precautions permanently.

Please keep this leaflet safe until your skin has healed.
Please take this leaflet to show your GP/Practice nurse

Dressings

Dressings must either be non-adhesive or silicone based.

*Dressings we recommend for use for radiotherapy reactions:*

- Mepilex Lite
- Mepilex Border
- Polymem
- Mepilex

If dressings need to be taped to keep them in place *Mepitac* tape should be used.

A yellow/green coloured discharge (exudate) will settle over the damaged skin. *This does not mean that the skin is infected.* It is part of the healing process and it contains enzymes which will help the skin to heal. This exudate will be absorbed by the dressing. The dressing does not need changing until the outer layer looks stained. Unless there is an excessive amount, the exudate should not be removed from the area on dressing change, as it is protecting the damaged skin and promoting healing.

*If you have any queries you can contact:*

**The Princess Royal Suite**  *Tel: 0113 206 7587*

Order numbers for any of the products listed can be supplied to healthcare professionals by calling the number above.