

Contacts

If you are unable to keep any appointments, or have any questions concerning your appointments, please telephone the Wellington Blood & Cancer Centre as soon as possible.

Radiation Treatment Department
Level 2
Wellington Blood & Cancer Centre
Wellington Regional Hospital
Private Bag 7902
Riddiford St
Newtown

Telephone: 04 806 2000

Monday - Friday: 8am – 4:30pm

5 North Ward oncology nurses are available for **urgent after hours advice** related to your treatment. This is after 4:30pm and on weekends. **Please call: 04 806 0418**

Advice for Male Patients Receiving Radiation Treatment to the Pelvis

Radiation Treatment Department

Wellington Blood and Cancer Centre

Introduction

This booklet is to inform you and those close to you about caring for yourself during treatment. It is common for patients receiving radiation treatment to the pelvis to feel tiredness, diarrhoea, constipation, nausea and urgency or pain when passing urine. You may also develop a skin reaction. These reactions build up slowly over the course of treatment. Your treatment team will help you manage these side effects, and it is important to note that patients may react differently. Do not hesitate to ask questions of your treatment team if you have any concerns or are experiencing problems.

We believe you should know what to look for, and how to encourage the healing process in your body. You may want to show this booklet to your support person so they also have an understanding of your treatment.

It is sometimes a good idea to write down any problems or questions you might have over this time. You can then discuss these with your doctor or treatment team next time you see them.

Tiredness

Some people experience tiredness towards the end of their treatment. This can be caused by a number of factors - travelling to and from treatment each day, change in routine, chemotherapy and the radiation treatment itself. You may require extra rest or some time off work.

Smoking

We strongly advise you to stop smoking as this can worsen the side effects of treatment. You may find this very difficult. Please speak to your treatment team about support available to help with this.

After Treatment

Reactions usually peak about 2 weeks after treatment. Most people find that side effects begin to ease about 2 - 4 weeks after treatment. Continue with the advice in this brochure until the reactions have subsided.

Support Services

Please ask a member of your treatment team if you would like more information or to access any of these services.

- Cancer Society
- Counselling (general / relationship / sexual issues)
- Social work
- Support groups
- Massage
- Fit for Life
- Chaplains

Constipation

Constipation is where your bowel motions become infrequent, dry and uncomfortable. There may be some stomach cramping, pain, and a bloated feeling. Please inform your treatment team if you are experiencing any of the above. It is also important to keep drinking plenty of fluids.

Sexual Health & Emotions

Treatment can affect people differently and you may notice a change in your mood, emotions and sex life. Radiation therapy or other treatments and medications you are taking may make it difficult to get an erection. You may also become less interested in having sex during treatment or for sometime afterwards. There are treatments and support services available so please speak with your doctor or a member of the team if you would like further information.

Some patients feel nervous about having sex during treatment. It is important to understand it is perfectly safe to do so. Cancer cannot be passed to your partner. You may also be concerned about the radiation therapy affecting your partner but radiation does not stay in the body so you will not harm them.

If you are having sex during and after your treatment, it is important to use contraception. Your doctor may advise you not to father a child during treatment and for up to six months after it is finished. You can ask your doctors for information about this.

Skin

During your radiation treatment you may experience a skin reaction in the pelvic area.

Reactions may include:

- Skin becoming pink or red.
- Skin feeling warm.
- Skin feeling itchy.
- Skin becoming sore and sensitive.
- Skin blistering, breaking, peeling or weeping particularly in the area between the buttocks and groin
- Temporary loss of pubic hair.

These reactions are normal and the severity of the reaction differs from person to person.

General Skin Advice

Do

- Use a simple moisturiser such as Health E Fatty Cream, Aveno or Calendula Cream on the treated area. Do this twice a day. You can start this before your treatment begins.
- Carry on using the soap or shower gel you are normally use.
- Personal hygiene is important so please bathe or shower regularly. Use a soft towel and pat the skin dry rather than rubbing it.

- Wear loose cotton or silk underwear if possible to reduce friction. Natural fibres are usually better tolerated.

Do Not

- Do not expose the treated area to excessive heat or cold e.g. electric blankets, hot water bottles, ice packs.

If the skin between the buttocks, groin, or in the anal canal becomes irritated or sore, let the treatment team know. The following advice may be helpful:

- Try bathing in a warm bath with ¼ cup of salt added.
- Use unscented baby wipes instead of toilet paper.
- There may also be special cushions available to make it more comfortable to sit down when your skin is sore. Your treatment team will be able to advise you about this.
- Radiation treatment may also cause a reaction in your anal canal. This may cause pain when passing bowel motions.
- If your anal canal is affected by treatment, you may be advised not to have anal intercourse during treatment and for a period after treatment. If you are unsure about whether this affects you then please talk to your doctor or the treatment team.

Urinary Symptoms

Changes within your bladder while having treatment to the pelvis are common. Reactions may include:

- Urinating more often (this may be more noticeable during the night)
- Stinging or burning while urinating
- Difficulty urinating

If you have these symptoms there are ways you can help.

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Drink cranberry juice as this may help relieve the symptoms

Please inform your treatment team if you are experiencing any of these side effects as there may be other things you can try.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is a loose, often watery bowel motion. There may be mucous or blood in your bowel motion, and some stomach cramping or pain.

Diarrhoea most commonly starts after 1-2 weeks of treatment. If you already take medication to keep your bowels regular, you may need to stop taking this while having treatment. It is also important to keep drinking plenty of fluids.

You may experience some bleeding when passing a motion or spotting in your underwear. Please let the treatment team know if this is happening.