

## Contact

If you are unable to keep any appointments, or have any questions concerning your appointment, 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 Patients Receiving Radiation Treatment to the Abdomen

**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 abdomen to experience tiredness, diarrhoea, constipation, nausea and vomiting, and occasionally a skin reaction. These reactions may be more noticeable if you are having chemotherapy as well. Side effects usually build up slowly during your treatment. Your treatment team will help you look after yourself. It is important to remember that everyone is different and the side effects can vary from person to person.

If you have questions, concerns or are experiencing any side effects please let your treatment team know.

You may want to show this booklet to your support people so that they also have an understanding of your treatment.

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

## What will happen after treatment?

Reactions usually worst about 2 weeks after treatment. Most people find that side effects resolve about 3 - 6 weeks after treatment. Continue with the advice in this brochure until the reactions have gone away.

The skin in the treated area will always be more sensitive to the sun. Keep the area covered as much as possible and once the skin has completely healed use a sunscreen SPF 30+.

## What support services are available?

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 worker
- Psychologist
- Support groups
- Massage
- Chaplains
- Whanua Care
- Pacific Health
- For female patients “Look Good Feel Better”

[www.lgfb.co.nz](http://www.lgfb.co.nz)

## Other Important Treatment Advice

### 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.

### Contraception Advice

#### Male: Contraception during and after Radiation Treatment

As you are having Radiation Treatment to the abdomen/pelvis, 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.

#### Female: Contraception during Radiation Treatment

If you are a woman of childbearing age, it is important that you **do not** become pregnant during your treatment. This is because radiation treatment given during pregnancy can harm a developing baby. Before starting treatment you will need to confirm that you aren't pregnant and that you understand you should avoid becoming pregnant during treatment (this means you will need to use a reliable form of birth control if you are sexually active). You can ask your doctors for information about this.

## Skin Reactions

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

### How can I look after my skin?

From the beginning of your treatment: -

- Use a simple moisturiser such as Health E Fatty Cream, Aveno or Calendula Cream on the treated area.
- Avoid being in the sun for long periods of time. If this is unavoidable please cover the area being treated as much as possible. Do not use Sunscreen until skin has completely healed.
- Use the soap or shower gel you are normally would.
- Avoid using hot water bottle and icepacks on the area being treated.
- Personal hygiene is important so please bathe or shower regularly. Use a soft towel and pat the skin dry rather than rubbing it.

## Tiredness

Some people experience tiredness toward the end of their treatment. This can be caused by a number of factors - travelling to and from treatment, anxiety about treatment, recent chemotherapy and the radiation treatment itself. Most people who experience this side effect don't find it too difficult to manage. They may require a nap in the afternoon or may need to take time off work, but this would be uncommon. If you are having difficulties sleeping let your treatment team know.

## **Nausea and Vomiting**

Some people may get nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (being sick) with treatment to the abdomen. Your doctor may prescribe you anti-sickness medication to take before your treatment. It is important to take these even if you don't feel sick.

### **Things you can do if you feel sick:**

- Avoid food with strong smells. Often cold food is better for this.
- Avoid fatty fried foods, spicy and very sweet foods.
- Eat small meals often, rather than three large meals. Sometimes having an empty stomach can make you feel more sick.
- Some people find that ginger and peppermint flavours helps nausea.
- Drink plenty of fluids – small amounts regularly may be easier to manage.

### **If you have been sick:**

- Try taking small sips of fluids or suck on an ice cube for an hour or so after being sick. This can help settle your stomach.
- Attempt to eat small amounts of bland food. Crackers or dry toast can help.

**If the nausea persists, tell a member of your treatment team.**

## **Diarrhoea**

Diarrhoea is a loose, often watery bowel motion (poos). 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.

Please inform your treatment team if you experience diarrhoea and they can give you advice on things you can do to help.

## **Constipation**

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

## **Dietitian**

There is a dietitian available to advise you if you are experiencing nausea, vomiting, constipation or diarrhoea. Please ask the treatment team if this is appropriate for you.