

# PATIENT INFORMATION FOR RADIATION THERAPY OF THE BREAST



## SUPPORTING YOU DURING TREATMENT

You will be reviewed regularly during your treatment by your Team. Please report any concerns to the Triage Nurse or to the Radiation Therapists on your treatment unit prior to having your treatment.

We are here to support you whilst you undergo radiation therapy. If you have medical conditions that are not cancer related please continue to seek advice from your general practitioner.

If at any time you feel you are very unwell, you should not wait until your next radiation therapy appointment. Please go to your nearest emergency department.

## MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS

Radiation therapy side effects vary from person to person. The following are some common side effects.

### SKIN REACTION

- During radiation therapy the skin in the treatment area may become red and sore. It is important not to use anything on your skin which may cause irritation. Use only the products advised by the staff.
- Hair loss may occur in the treatment area.

Please follow these guidelines:

#### **Do:**

- Wear loose fitting clothing over the treatment area eg comfortable bra or singlet. Wearing a pad between bra and skin may be more comfortable if irritation occurs. Pads are provided by the nurses.
- Avoid under-wire bras or heavy prosthetic bras.
- Use mild, unscented, non-alcohol based soap.
- Use warm water, rinse and pat dry with a soft towel.
- Use a moisturiser, like sorbolene with 10% glycerine, which does not contain perfumes or additives and is a thin lotion not a thick cream.
- If your arm pit is in the treatment area, use unscented, alcohol-free deodorant.
- Avoid things that will irritate or abrade the skin in the treatment area e.g. wet shaving. Use an electric shaver.
- Avoid sun exposure to the treatment area.
- You may swim during treatment. Shower immediately afterwards.

#### **Do not:**

- Use any tape or bandaids on the treatment area.
- Rub, scrub or scratch the skin in the treatment area.
- Use any creams, lotions, powders etc. unless recommended by your treatment team.
- Use hot packs, hot water bottles, hot water, cold packs or ice packs on the treatment area.

### **BREAST TENDERNESS (OR SWELLING)**

May occur during the course of treatment.

- Inform staff if swelling occurs.
- Continue exercises.
- Your Radiation Oncologist will organise referral to the Physiotherapist if required.

### **TIREDDNESS**

It is not unusual to feel tired while you are having treatment.

- Rest if necessary.
- See the Triage Nurse for more information.

## **AFTER TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

After you have completed your radiation therapy it is important to remember to manage your symptoms until they have subsided.

- The skin reaction may become worse after treatment has finished. Continue your skin care regime until the skin heals.
- Always keep the treated area out of direct sunlight.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER RADIATION THERAPY?**

At your last 'On Treatment Review' appointment, your doctor will decide on the appropriate follow-up care.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information visit eviQ Cancer Treatments Online, an online service of the Cancer Institute NSW:

[www.eviQ.org.au](http://www.eviQ.org.au)

If you are worried about anything, or are unsure of how to manage, please speak to the Triage Nurse or telephone **(02) 4014 3654**.

If you have any concerns **after 4 pm contact the Emergency Department on (02) 4921 1211**