

Radiation Therapy – Head & Neck

Radiation Treatment

- Treatment is painless - it is similar to getting an x-ray but with higher energy to treat cancer.
- Each treatment takes about 15 minutes - it is important to lie still and breathe normally.

Possible Side Effects

Always discuss new side effects with your radiation oncology team.

Skin reaction

- Skin in treatment area may develop redness 2-3 weeks into treatment.
- Only use creams that have been suggested/prescribed by your radiation team - do not apply them on the treatment area at least 2 hours before radiation.
- Use mild unscented soap and pat or air dry after bathing.
- Temporary hair loss in treatment area.
- Use an electric razor if you have to shave.
- Avoid direct sunlight and extreme temperatures such as heating pads and ice packs on the treatment area.
- Avoid scratching or rubbing the skin in the treatment area.
- Avoid cosmetics on treatment area.
- Use a saline compress to help clean and soothe irritated skin. Do not use Epsom salts.

Saline Compress Recipe:

- *Heat 1L of water to boiling and remove from heat*
- *Add 1.5-2 tsp of table salt and stir until dissolved*
- *Cover and leave at room temperature to cool*
- *Make fresh each evening*

How to use:

- *Wash hands*
- *Place gauze or clean facecloth in clean bowl and cover with solution*
- *Lay gauze/facecloth on area for 10-15 minutes*
- *Pat area dry*
- *Repeat as often as required*

Mouth or throat soreness and dryness

- Drink clear fluids, especially water, while eating.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Use a soft or extra-soft bristled toothbrush.
- Eat soft foods with sauces or gravies to ease swallowing.
- A mouthwash may be prescribed; do not use commercial mouthwash.
- Directions for **an oral rinse** – can use 4-5 times daily
 - *Mix 1 tbsp. of baking soda or salt in a 500 ml bottle of water. Sip, swish, gargle and spit.*

Thick sputum

- Use club soda to rinse your mouth.
- Drink lots of water.

Hoarseness

- You may continue to get hoarse up to 2-3 weeks after last treatment.
- Rest your voice; use a pen and paper to communicate.
- Sip clear fluids throughout the day.

Taste changes

- Avoid metal cutlery if foods taste metallic.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals presented in an appealing way.
- If you haven't been referred to a dietitian at the cancer centre ask a member of your healthcare team.

Fatigue

- You may notice a decrease in energy level - listen to your body and rest when needed.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of clear fluids.

Radiation Appointments

Radiation treatments are scheduled Monday-Friday, except on holidays.

You will be scheduled for a *Radiation Review Appointment* weekly when you begin your treatments. At this appointment you may see a nurse, nurse practitioner, physician or radiation oncologist.

Important Contact Information

General Directory

(709) 777-6480

Daffodil Place

(709) 753-6520 or toll free 1-888-753-6520

Extended Stay St. John's

(709) 777-6831 or 6832

Cancer Patient Navigators

St. John's	(709) 777-2094/2368	Clareville	(709) 466-5763
Central	(709) 256-5571	Western	(709) 784-5010
St. Anthony	(709) 454-3999	Toll free:	(855) 848-3888

Look Good Feel Better Program (www.lgfb.ca)

Eastern	(709) 777-6480
Central	(709) 489-5822
Western	(709) 634-6542

Going to miss an appointment?

Please call (709) 777-8206

**Please visit the Eastern Health Cancer Care website for more information
cancercare.easternhealth.ca**