Common questions

Can I wash the marks off my skin?

• We ask that you don’t deliberately wash them off as this may further irritate your skin. The Radiation Therapists will re-apply them each day as required.

What happens after my treatment is finished?

• Your follow up arrangements will be discussed and organised by your treating team prior to completing treatment.

When do the side-effects settle?

• The treatment keeps on working even though you have stopped coming in for treatment. Therefore the symptoms may get a little worse before they get better. Generally the side-effects will have settled within two to four weeks of finishing your treatment course.

Remember:

Experienced staff members are available to help you. Please do not hesitate to ask for advice.

Contact details:

Epworth Richmond
Level 4, Epworth Centre
32 Erin Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002
Ph: +61 3 9936 8226

Epworth Freemasons
166 Clarendon Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002
Ph: +61 3 9483 3331
Radiation Therapy is the use of radiation to destroy cancer cells.

- It works because cancer cells are more sensitive to radiation than normal cells. When a small dose of radiation is given each day over several weeks, normal cells can recover from radiation but cancer cells cannot.
- Radiation Therapy is often given to people who have cancers that arise in, or have spread to the pelvic spine from other sites (metastases).
- Radiation Therapy may also be used in conjunction with other types of treatment such as surgery or chemotherapy or a combination of all of these treatment options.

What are the possible side effects?

Side effects of Radiation Therapy are predictable for most patients, depending on your treatment site, the dose being given, the number of treatments and your general health.

- **Pain and discomfort**— the Nursing staff will give you information about pain control and your Doctor will write prescriptions if required. It is important that you follow the pain control instructions, which may include pre-treatment analgesia, to ensure your comfort.
- **Pain flare** - Radiation Therapy to “bone areas” can cause a temporary increase in pain in the area being treated. It usually last 12-36 hours. Nurses will discuss the use of additional “breakthrough” analgesia and your Doctor will write prescriptions if required.
- **Skin reaction**— The degree of reaction varies from person to person. After two or three weeks from start of treatment, your skin may become red and irritated. This means if you are having only five to ten treatments the skin reaction may occur in the weeks following the completion of your Radiation Therapy. The Nursing staff will discuss your individual treatment area and if this side effect may occur. Follow advice given and contact the Nursing staff by phone for further support should you require it. The skin will recover usually within two to three weeks following the completion of treatment.
- **Fatigue**—you may become increasingly tired as you progress toward the end of your treatment. This is a normal reaction to the Radiation Therapy and each person is affected to varying degrees. Finding a balance between rest and activity will help you cope.
- **Bowel irritation (including diarrhoea)** - this is not uncommon after two to three weeks of radiotherapy to the spine in the pelvic area. There may be an increase in how often you feel the need to use your bowels. You may also experience some discomfort if you strain and you may notice some blood and/or mucus in the bowel motions. Please report any changes to Nursing staff as the severity needs to be monitored. A temporary change of diet or medication may help.
- **Bladder irritation**—Symptoms of bladder inflammation/irritation are common. There may be a burning sensation when passing urine (dysuria), or urinary frequency. Should these symptoms occur please report to the Nursing staff or your Doctor promptly for advice and treatment options.

How can I manage my skin while on treatment?

- You will be recommended a skin moisturiser to use during treatment. At the start of treatment apply cream to the area being treated TWICE A DAY, but not in the skin folds.
- Avoid wearing tight fitting clothing that could potentially rub or irritate the skin. Loose cotton underwear is best.
- You may wash the skin that is being treated with warm water and a mild non-perfumed soap. Pat the skin dry—do not rub.
- Avoid use talcum powder in the treated area.
- Avoid exposure of the treated skin to excessive temperatures including direct sunlight, heat packs, ice packs, saunas or hot spas during the course of your radiation therapy.