

Skincare during radiotherapy

Self-care for your skin

This booklet is for patients that are about to undergo radiotherapy. Within the booklet you will find information on 'self-care' to protect and care for your skin during and immediately following treatment.

Flamigel[®] RT





Your Healthcare Professional (HCP) will give you advice on washing & dressing, moisturising and protecting your skin from the sun and cold.

Together with your HCP you can take suitable precautions from day 1 of radiotherapy.

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Your doctor has recommended radiotherapy

You are not alone: 1 in 2 cancer patients receives radiotherapy at some time or another

For many patients being made aware they will have to undergo radiotherapy is an emotional experience filled with uncertainty.

Within this booklet you will find the answers to many of the questions you have and you will also find the information you need to protect & care for your skin through 'self-care'.



Strong skin

Radiotherapy or radiation aims to destroy cancer cells. In doing so, radiation also affects the surrounding tissue and skin. However, healthy tissue recovers more quickly than cancer cells. This means that the treatment is able to destroy the cancer, while healthy cells can recover.



Possible skin reaction

Radiotherapy can cause redness to the skin at an early stage. The skin can then become dry and flaky, after which blisters may appear. Your skin can also itch and even become painful.

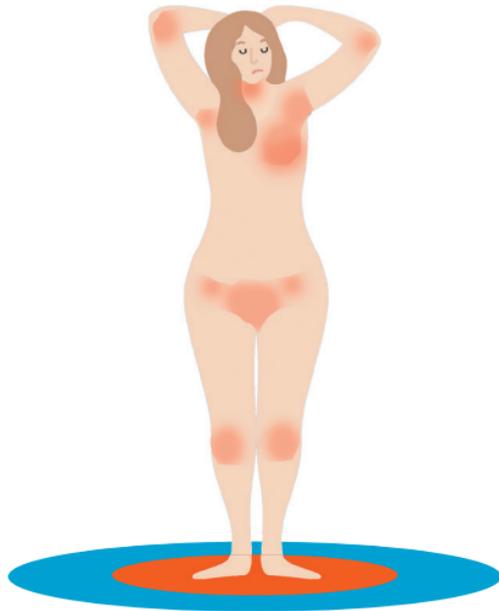
It is important to limit the skin damage caused by the radiotherapy as much as possible, so that you can complete your treatment as comfortably as possible. You can do a lot yourself, see our tips further in this guide.



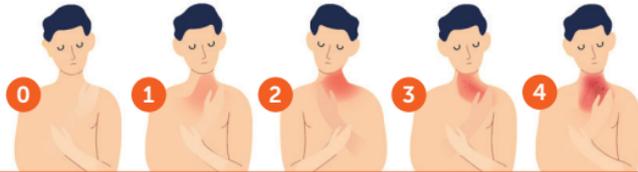
Skin sensitivity

The sensitivity to skin reactions during radiotherapy depends on many factors. Reactions can be treatment related, such as the dose administered on each occasion. There is also the matter of individual sensitivity.

Areas of skin with many folds are more liable to suffer skin reactions: the neck, ear, breast, armpit, groin and skin around intimate areas. Skin around the joints is also more sensitive.



Five stages



Skin reactions during radiotherapy are categorised in five stages according to their severity, from stage 0 (unaffected skin) to stage 4. There are specific recommendations relating to skin and wound care for each of these stages.

Specific treatments are available. The HCPs in your medical team will give you assistance.

Skin reactions during radiotherapy

Symptoms

- No skin reaction
- Mild to painful redness
- Dry flaky skin
- Itchy blisters

Treatment

Use a hydroactive colloid gel, such as Flamigel® RT. Apply from day 1 of radiotherapy treatment 3 x/day an amount of Flamigel® RT to the treated area and a large zone around it. Gently massage.

- Damp flaky skin
- Open wounds

Specific wound care, recommended by your HCP.



Don't delay act from day 1

Here are some useful tips. It is important that you take these precautionary measures from day 1 of your treatment, to reduce the risk of skin damage. Do not wait until the redness appears.



Tip 1: washing



It is recommended that you wash the area of skin that has received radiation. This relieves the redness, itchiness, flakiness and pain.

- Take a shower using a gentle jet.
- Avoid soaking in a bath as this softens the skin.
- Use lukewarm (but not hot) water.
- Prevent dehydration by using neutral soap, soap-free washing gel or washing oil.
- Apply soap to the area that has received radiation with your hands, rather than a flannel. Hands are softer on the skin.
- Dry the skin by patting, but not by rubbing. Dry the folds of the skin with care.
- Use deodorant or perfume without alcohol if applying to skin that has received radiation.
- Use an electric razor in the event of radiation to the throat or neck. Do not use aftershave.
- Also, wash your hands before applying Flamigel® RT. Clean hands reduce the risk of infection, should the skin become raw.

Tip 2: protecting and hydrating the skin

Apply a moisturising hydroactive colloid gel such as Flamigel® RT up to 3x a day.



- Cover the area of radiated skin with a hydroactive colloid gel such as Flamigel® RT at least three times a day. This creates a **protective barrier** which moisturises and repairs the skin, and soothes any pain.
- As with other measures, it is important to use the moisturising colloid gel **from day 1 of your treatment. Do not wait until the redness appears.**
- Moisturising colloid gels are suitable for dry, flaky skin. If the skin is weeping or broken speak to your HCP about alternative treatment.

Tip 3: what to wear



✓ DO

- Wear loose items of clothing. Pressure and friction prevent blood circulation in the skin, making skin reactions more likely.
- Ideally, wear cotton clothing, which allows the skin to breathe.

✗ DO NOT

- Wear a tie when receiving radiation to the neck. A scarf gives protection from friction caused by a collar.
- Wear a tight bra or underwired bra when receiving breast radiation. A sports bra is generally fine.
- Wear a belt, tight underwear or tight jeans when receiving radiation to the pelvis.
- Use adhesive plasters in the radiated area.



Tip 4: avoid exposure to extreme temperatures

- Protect yourself from wind and cold.
- Cover the area of radiated skin to avoid contact with direct sunlight.
- Do not apply bags of ice or a hot water bottle to the area of radiated skin.
- Do not use a sauna or sunbed.
- Avoid swimming, unless your doctor or nurse advise otherwise. Swimming pool water is too cold and chlorine dehydrates the skin.



Once radiotherapy is complete

Once the radiotherapy is complete the skin reaction may remain visible for another 2 to 4 weeks.

It is recommended to continue all of the measures related to bathing, clothing, exposure to extreme temperatures and moisturising during these 2-4 weeks following radiotherapy.

Flamigel® RT, clinically proven

Flamigel® RT is a protective gel (not a moisturiser) which creates a barrier and therefore protects the skin against radiotherapy induced skin reactions. The efficiency of Flamigel® RT has been clinically proven in several studies.^{1,2}

The use of Flamigel® RT, from the start of radiation therapy slows down the appearance of skin reactions and reduces the risk of moist, flaking skin.

1 Censabella S. et al. Retrospective study of radiotherapy induced skin reactions in breast cancer patients; reduced incidence of moist desquamation with a hydroactive colloid gel versus dexpanthenol. Eur J Oncol Nurs. 2014 Oct; 18(5);499-504.

2 Censabella S. et al. Efficacy of a hydroactive colloid gel versus historical controls for the prevention of radiotherapy-induced moist desquamation in breast cancer patients. Eur J Oncol Nurs. 2017 Aug; 29:1-7.

Care advice Flamigel® RT



- ✓ protects the skin
- ✓ hydrates the skin
- ✓ soothes the pain
- ✓ reduces redness
- ✓ cools the skin

Flamigel® RT is not sticky or greasy. This means that you can apply Flamigel® RT and get dressed without having to cover the area with a dressing or wait for it to dry. It will not stain clothes.

Care

Always ask your HCP's advice.

1



Clean

Clean the skin with a specific cleansing product.

2



Dry

Dry the skin gently with a clean dressing.

3



Treat

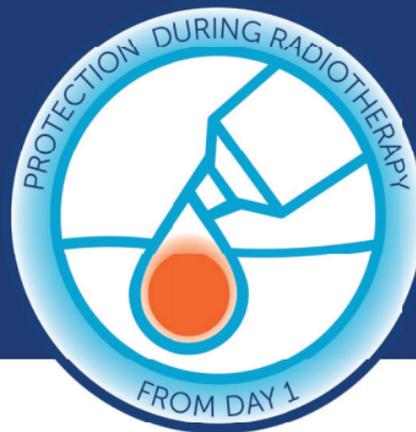
Apply from day 1 of radiotherapy treatment 3 x/day an amount of Flamigel® RT to the treated area and a large zone around it. Gently massage.



Advice is based on the 'Protocol for caring for acute skin reactions during and after radiotherapy', version 2.0 from the VVRO (Nursing Association for Radiotherapy and Oncology).

This publication is an adaptation of the 2018 patient pocket guide written by Dr Michèle Langendries and published by Roularta HealthCare. References to products from Flen Health are our own addition.

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