



# Treatment Guidelines

## Breast

The information that you find here is to help you to know what to expect during your treatment. It also helps you to learn ways to deal with any side effects that you may have. Please ask a member of the team (doctor, nurse, technologist and nutritionist) to answer any of your questions.

### Introduction

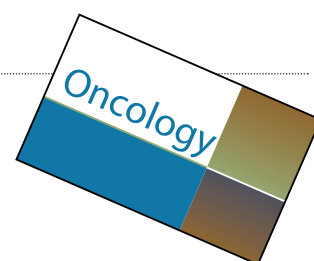
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Radiation therapy side effects vary from person to person. The side effects depend on several things such as the area of the body to be treated, the type of radiation used, the amount of radiation, whether you are having chemotherapy at the same time and your general health.

### Oncology Passport

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This is your tool to write information and keep track about your diagnosis, treatment, possible symptoms and resources. Please bring it with you everyday.



### Treatment Set Up

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- The technologist may apply ink “markings” on your skin for your treatments.

### Will the radiation therapy affect my skin?

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- When radiation is given it passes through the skin to reach the area to be treated. Skin problems are an expected side effect for people who receive radiation therapy. The skin might become dry, itchy, red or darker in color and sometimes peel or weep.
- Advise the technologist if you notice any skin dryness, itching, tenderness, redness or breakdown..

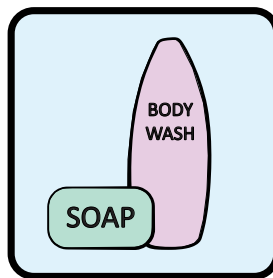
## How should I care for my skin during treatment?

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### Cleansing and Moisturizing:

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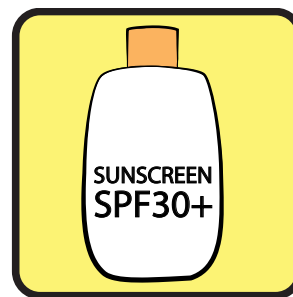
- Take quick showers or baths
- Wash your skin gently with lukewarm water and mild unscented soap such as Ivory® or Dove®
- Lather your hands with soap and apply gently to your skin.
- Rinse your skin well and pat dry with a soft towel
- Twice daily use unscented lotion such as Lubriderm®, Aveeno®, Glaxal Base®, Lipikar®
- Do not apply cream or lotion on skin even if the doctor prescribed it for at least 4 hours before treatment.
- If your skin begins to peel or weep, or feels very irritated, stop using the lotion. Inform your doctor or nurse; you may receive a prescription for another type of skin cream.



### Protecting your skin:

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- Wear loose-fitting clothing with soft, natural fibers such as cotton.
- Cotton bras without under wire are recommended.
- Always protect treated skin from the sun.
- Protect treated skin from the winter wind and cold
- Wear sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater) when outdoors when treatment ends.



### Soothing the skin:

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- Apply a cool compress for 10 to 15 minutes 4 times a day to relieve itching and burning.
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## What should I avoid doing to my skin during treatment?

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- Do not wash off the skin markings
- Do not shave your underarm on the treated side
- Do not use tape on skin being treated
- Do not use powder, deodorant or antiperspirant on the side being treated
- Avoid using creams and lotions not recommended by your doctor or nurse on skin being treated
- Do not rub, scrub, or scratch your skin
- Avoid tight or rough clothing and synthetic materials
- Avoid extreme hot or cold to skin being treated
- Avoid hot tubs, water bottles, heating pads and ice packs
- Avoid swimming during radiation treatment and for as long as it takes for your skin to heal completely

## Will I feel tired?

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- Fatigue or a feeling of tiredness is a common side effect and can continue for several months after radiation therapy ends.
- If you are tired, then take naps or rest periods as needed.
- Continue your regular activities but limit yourself when you feel tired. Listen to your body.
- Have a friend or family member come with you for support and to assist with driving and daily activities.
- Mild physical activity such as walking is encouraged and may be helpful to fight fatigue.
- Fatigue is also common among persons who are depressed or have difficulty to cope. Talk to your treatment team.



## What can I do if I feel overwhelmed?

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- Feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, or of difficulty to cope are normal. Each person has a different way of dealing with difficult situations. Tell the team if you are having any of these feelings.
- We can offer you counseling with our Psychosocial Oncology Program.
- We can also offer information and/or referral for support, such as Can Support at MUHC or community based self-help groups.

## Where can I get information on the Internet?

Not all information found on the Internet is accurate or reliable. If you have access to the Internet and you would like more information on your cancer or its treatment, you can visit these reliable websites:

[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) - Canadian Cancer Society

[www.fqc.qc.ca](http://www.fqc.qc.ca) - Fondation Québécoise du Cancer

[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net) - American Society of Clinical Oncology

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) - National Cancer Institute



## What should I do if I feel very sick or if there is an emergency?

Should you experience any serious reactions that are causing you to worry, please call your doctor or nurse

- During a weekday - tel: 514-934-8040.
- At night or during the weekend: call the Montreal General Hospital switchboard - tel: 514- 934-1934 and ask for the Radiation Oncology Resident on Call.
- If your symptoms are particularly severe or you are unable to reach the Radiation Oncologist you should go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.

### IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

**Information provided by pamphlet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.**

We would like to recognize the MUHC Patient Education Office and the McGill Molson Medical Informatics for their support throughout the development of these treatment guidelines, the design and layout, as well as for the creation of all the images. We would also like to thank the MUHC Patient Education Committee for translation and printing support for this project.



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