

# Your care during radiation therapy to the abdomen

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## Your radiation treatment appointments

- Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment time
- At the Level 0 reception desk, scan the barcode on your radiation schedule or check in with the receptionist, then go to the waiting area closest to your treatment unit.
- Appointments are every day, Monday to Friday. Regular hours for appointments are between 8 am and 6 pm. There are no scheduled treatments on the weekends or holidays. Appointments are not the same time every day.
- Your treatment may be over several days or weeks and may start on any day of the week. We will give you a schedule of your treatment appointments.

## Treatment appointment changes

- Your schedule may change while you are on treatment. We will try to give you as much notice as possible.



If you are unable to attend or will be late, please call us at 905-387-9495, ext. 63600 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

If you are unwell, please call your Primary Team.

## Questions

- If you have questions about your schedule, treatments or side effects, please ask your Radiation Therapist.

## Your review appointments

- You will meet with a health care provider on a regular basis to check how you are doing. This may or may not be your doctor.
- When you come for each appointment, please complete a Symptom Assessment. You will be asked to rate different symptoms about how you are feeling along with your activity level. You can complete the Symptom Assessment at home on-line <https://isaac.cancercare.on.ca/> or on a touch screen computer at the JCC.
- By completing a Symptom Assessment you will help us understand how you are feeling. Together we can discuss what you need help with most and offer help.

## Patient Assessment Office

- If you have concerns or problems related to radiation treatment on a day that you do not have a review appointment, you can see a nurse in the Patient Assessment Office (next to Clinic G). Your Radiation Therapist may direct or recommend that you go to the Patient Assessment Office.
- If your radiation treatment appointment is late in the day (after 4:00 pm), and you wish to see a nurse, you are welcome to arrive early. After you check in, walk over to the treatment area, speak with a therapist who will then direct you to the Patient Assessment Office.

## While on treatment

- When you arrive in the radiation unit, you may be asked to change into a hospital gown.
  - Treatment appointments are 10 to 30 minutes long. Most of the time is spent getting ready for treatment. The actual time of the radiation beam is usually a few minutes each day.
  - A therapist will guide you into the planned position and you will need to lie still and breathe as instructed. You will not feel the radiation at all. The machine makes a humming noise when treatment is being delivered.
  - During treatment, the Radiation Therapists leave the room. They will watch you on a TV screen and speak with you by intercom. You can signal a therapist by calling out or waving your hand.
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## Side effects

The side effects you have will depend on:

- your general health
- any other treatments you may have had or are having
- the location of your tumour or lesion
- the number of radiation treatments



Your health care team will check for side effects.

Please tell them your concerns.

### **Fatigue – more tired than usual**

You may feel tired over the course of your treatments. This may be due to the stress of treatment combined with the tissue damage in the treated area. The tiredness may increase for a week after treatment, but should gradually go away. Rest when needed, and pace your activities.

### **Pain or discomfort (cramping) in the abdomen**

Radiation can cause swelling in the tissue being treated. There are medications to help ease this discomfort. It will take 1 to 2 weeks for the swelling to decrease and the pain to lessen.

### **Nausea and vomiting**

Nausea and vomiting are quite common during treatment. If your treatment involves the stomach or gut, you may not feel like eating or drinking. There are medications and things you can do to lessen these symptoms. You want to make sure that you are getting enough fluids and nutrition during treatment.

### **Diarrhea or loose stools**

Radiation can irritate your gut (bowels) causing it to move faster and be less able to absorb nutrition. You may have diarrhea or loose stools. You may have an urgent need to use the bathroom. You may need medication to get your bowels under control. You must also make sure that you get enough fluid and nutrition.

### **Mild skin irritation in the treatment area**

The amount of radiation to the exposed skin is very small. However, you may have some redness and your skin may feel warm where the radiation beams enter and leave your body. The redness and warmth usually goes away on its own without medication or cream.

## Side effects (continued)

### Dry cough

If the area being treated includes the lower portion of a lung you may get a dry cough. You may need medication to stop the cough, but it will usually go away on its own a week or so after treatment.

## Take care of yourself

### Skin

- Wash daily with warm water during a shower or bath.
- Use a mild non-deodorant soap such as Dove or baby soap.
- Wash gently and pat the skin dry with a soft cotton towel.
- Be gentle in areas where there are skin folds.
- Avoid scratching and scrubbing the treatment area.
- Protect the treated skin from all sources of heat or cold. Avoid hot water bottles, heating pads, ice packs and sun and wind exposure.
- Do not use any creams (including sunscreen), lotions and sprays on the treated area unless recommended by your primary team.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing made of soft material such as cotton, over the area being treated.
- Avoid placing adhesive tape or bandages on the treated skin.
- Talk with your primary team before swimming.

### Activity and eating

- If you experience tiredness it may increase for a week after treatment but should gradually go away. Rest when needed, and pace your activities.
- Talk with your primary team before increasing your physical activity.
- Eat and drink to keep your nutritional and energy levels up. Changes in what you eat may be needed.



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