

## Your care during and after radiation therapy to the breast

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### Your radiation treatment appointments

- Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment time.
- Radiation treatment services are located on Level 0. One floor below the main entrance to the Juravinski Cancer Centre (JCC).
- At the Level 0 reception desk, scan the bar code on your radiation schedule or check in with receptionist, then go to the waiting area closest to your treatment unit.
- Appointments are usually every day, Monday to Friday. There are no scheduled treatments on the weekends or holidays.
- 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, extension 63600 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

If possible, please give us 24 hours notice.

## 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. There are computers throughout the JCC to complete the assessment or you can complete it at home.  
<https://isaac.cancercare.on.ca>

As well, discuss your symptoms with your health care team so they can better understand how you are feeling.

## 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

- 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 less than a few minutes each day.
  - When you arrive in the radiation unit, you may need to change into a hospital gown.
  - During treatment, you will not feel the radiation at all. The therapist will guide you into the planned position and you will need to lie still and breathe as instructed.
  - During treatment, the radiation therapists leave the room, but will watch you on a TV screen and speak with you by intercom.
  - **If you have questions, please ask your radiation therapist.**
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## Side effects

Skin reaction and fatigue are possible side effects of radiation therapy to the breast. The side effects you have will depend on:

- your general health
- any other treatments you may have had or are having
- the amount and type of radiation you need
- on the area being treated



Your health care team will check for side effects.

Please tell them your concerns.

## Skin changes

Skin changes include tenderness, redness, dryness and itchiness. These changes usually start during the second week of treatment. The changes can be worse in areas where skin rubs against skin, such as under the arm or in the fold under the breast. Changes may also occur in areas of increased sensitivity such as the nipple and surgical scar. You may also get swelling of the breast, underarm and arm on the affected side.

- Skin changes peak about 1 week after treatment and then start to get better.
- It is possible that some skin changes may be permanent, such as darker colour, a thin, shiny texture and spider-like veins.

## Fatigue

You may feel tired over the course of your treatment. Any stress, worry, travelling to and from appointments, plus the change in your routine may add to this feeling of tiredness. Tissue damage may free some protein factors in your blood that make you feel tired. The tired feeling will usually go away a week or two after treatment. Rest when needed.

## Emotional changes

It is not unusual to have concerns regarding stress, anxiety, body image. You may find it hard to sleep and feel restless. It is important to discuss your emotional changes with your health care team.



**Supportive Care is available for any emotional, practical or family difficulties you may be having during treatment.**

## Take care of yourself

### Skin

Taking care of your skin can help lessen any skin reaction you may experience. Please follow these instructions, or other instructions you may have been given by your health care team during your treatments and for about 2 weeks after all treatments are done.

- Do not rub, scratch or scrub the area being treated.
- Gently wash the skin in the treatment area with warm water and a mild non-deodorant soap such as dove or baby soap, while bathing or taking a shower.
- Gently pat dry with a soft towel.
- Protect the skin from all sources of heat or cold such as hot water bottles, heating pads, hot tubs, saunas or ice packs.
- Use hats and clothing to protect skin from direct sunlight or harsh cold.
- Use **Glaxal base cream** 3 times a day from the first day of treatment. Do not use any creams or lotions on the treatment area unless directed by your health care team.
- Do not use makeup, perfume, shaving lotions or cologne.
- Do not shave on the side being treated.
- You may use deodorant or antiperspirant on intact skin.
- Wear loose fitting cotton clothes and comfortable open collar shirts.

### Fatigue

- Take rest periods during the day if needed and pace your activities.
- Talk with your primary team before exercising or swimming.
- Eat to keep you nutritional and energy levels up.



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