

Breast Cancer: Help for Skin Changes From Radiation

Changes to your skin are common if you have radiation therapy for breast cancer.

For example, the area that's getting radiation may turn red and tender and get more sensitive. Or it may itch, peel, or blister.

Sometimes, the skin starts out dry and red. And then later, it turns moist and "weepy."

These changes may be uncomfortable, but they're usually temporary.

As you go through treatment, your medical team will tell you what kinds of skin changes to expect.

But if you're having a problem or have signs of infection— like a fever—be sure to tell your doctor.

The following tips may help with discomfort.

Your care provider may have some other ideas too.

Do what you can to keep the treated area from getting more irritated.

Wear comfortable, soft clothes. And keep the area out of the sun.

Wash with lukewarm water, and then pat the area dry with a soft towel.

Use mild, unscented deodorants, lotions, soaps, or creams.

Your care team may recommend specific lotions.

Stay away from too much heat or cold on the area— so no hot tubs, heating pads, or cold packs.

Several weeks after radiation treatment ends, your skin will heal.

It may not look exactly like it did before treatment.

It may be a little darker or feel a little thicker.

And it may always need a bit of extra care.

Caring for your skin during radiation treatment may seem like a lot, especially given everything else you're dealing with.

But knowing a bit more about what to expect— and how best to care for your skin—can help.