

Radiation Therapy: Caring For Your Skin Non-Prescription

Radiation therapy can cause skin changes in your treatment area, so it's important to take extra good care of your skin during radiation therapy. Your doctor may suggest that you use creams or lotions to make the area feel better. Follow your doctor's instructions on how to care for your skin. For more information about what to expect, and how to care for skin changes, see page 40 of the *Radiation Therapy and You* booklet from the National Cancer Institute.

How should I care for my skin?

Your skin in the area being treated should be gently washed and dried when you arrive for your daily treatments. Use mild soaps that are for sensitive skin. If you use a skin care product before your treatment, allow 4 hours for it to absorb. The goal is to protect the skin that may be irritated by the radiation treatments. To prevent additional irritation in the area being treated:

- Do not shave with a razor blade (electric shavers are generally okay)
- Do not use perfumes, powders or cosmetics
- Do not use anti-bacterial, deodorant or heavily-scented soaps
- Do not use deodorants/antiperspirants that contain aluminum
- Do not scratch or rub in the treatment area
- Do not wear tight fitting clothing such as pantyhose

Your doctor may tell you it is okay to apply non-aluminum deodorants or to use pure cornstarch. **Warning: stop using cornstarch if you develop open areas.**

Your doctor has recommended that you use one or more of these products. If there is a check mark next to the product, please buy it at your local pharmacy, store or online.



Aquaphor® - Can be found at any grocery or pharmacy, moisturizes the skin by staying on top providing relief from the dryness and tightening that can be caused by the radiation. Apply to the area after your treatment and again before bedtime, unless otherwise directed.



Alra® - Is a combination of aloe gel, vitamin E, lanolin, allantoin and soluble collagen. It was designed to soothe skin affected by radiation therapy. It is water soluble and rinses off easily. Alra® can be purchased at the pharmacy on the first floor of the Taubman Center, at the pharmacy on B1 of the Cancer Center, and some local pharmacies. You can also buy it online at Alra's website <http://www.alra.com/>. Apply to the area after your treatment and again before bedtime, unless otherwise directed.



Boiron® Calendula Ointment - Calendula is a homeopathic treatment for burns. This ointment can be found at Whole Foods, Plum Market and online. Apply to the area after your treatment and again before bedtime, unless otherwise directed.



Aloe gels 98%-99% - Look closely at the label. Many aloe gels have high alcohol content, or contain other products that could irritate the skin more. Only buy aloe gels that are 98-99%, or use the gel directly from an aloe plant. Apply to the area after your treatment and again before bedtime, unless otherwise directed.

What should I do if I have any problems?

Please notify your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Raw open areas that are moist, have unusual drainage or foul odor.
- Unrelieved pain.
- Fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit.

Who should I call if I have questions?

On weekdays, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, contact the Radiation Oncology Department at (734) 936-4300.

On weekends, holidays or after 5:00 pm on weekdays, contact the paging operator at (734) 936-6267. Ask to have the On-Call Radiation Oncology Resident paged.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Judy Baker, RN, BSN, OCN
Reviewers: James Hayman MD, MBA

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Document: 01564 / Last Revised: 04/2018