

What to Do When Radiation Causes Skin Damage

One of the most common side effects of radiation therapy is a skin condition called radiation dermatitis.

More than half of people with cancer will receive radiation therapy at some point during their cancer treatment. Radiation therapy is often delivered from a machine outside the body. One of the most common side effects is a skin condition called radiation dermatitis, which can range from a mild, red rash (erythema) and itchy, peeling or flaking skin (dry desquamation) to a more severe reaction with blisters and wet, peeling skin (moist desquamation).

CAUSE AND RISK FACTORS > unfortunately, radiation injures or kills healthy cells as well as cancer cells in the treated area. Repeated radiation exposure causes an imbalance in tissue damage and repair so that exposed skin is damaged faster than it can repair itself. Treatment-related factors that increase the risk and severity of skin reactions include high daily and cumulative radiation doses, the type of beam used to deliver the radiation, a large treatment field, treatment to areas with skin folds (such as the head and neck, the groin or under the breast), and whether it was delivered with certain chemotherapies.

Moderate to severe reactions, such as moist desquamation and blistering, can occur toward the end of treatment, four to six weeks after treatment, or with a cumulative radiation dose of 45 to 60 Gray (Gy); a Gray is a measure of radiation dose.

MANAGEMENT > Radiation burns and skin irritation can interrupt treatment if not managed early and properly. Patients are advised to wear loose-fitting clothing, avoid fabrics that can cause itchiness and check with a healthcare provider before using lotions, perfumes or deodorants.

Gently disinfecting of affected area with Argasol 30ppm Silver Solution and application of Argasol 24ppm Silver Skin Gel or Carestat 32ppm Silver Gel 3 times daily.

