

# RADIATION THERAPY TO THE BREAST

Most Common Side Effects

## What You Will Find Inside:

1. What is Radiation Therapy?
2. Where Will I Be Treated On My Body?
3. Common Side Effects
4. Learn How to Manage Side Effects

# What is Radiation Therapy?

Radiation therapy works to damage and kill cancer cells. It can also damage healthy cells. This can lead to you having side effects (changes) where your body is being treated.

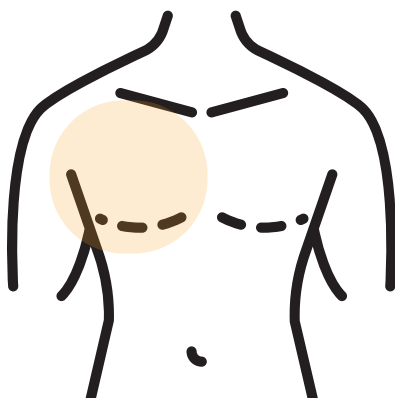
## Where Will I Be Treated On My Body?

After your CT/Planning appointment your Radiation Oncologist (cancer doctor) will create your treatment plan. You might have treatment to the:

- Whole breast, or
- Chest wall (post-mastectomy)

\*In some cases lymph nodes may also be treated.

Your Radiation Oncologist or Radiation Therapist can tell you exactly where you will be getting treatment.



**Picture 1:** Image showing area of the body that is treated during radiation to the breast.

## Common Side Effects

Radiation therapy can cause side effects in the area being treated.

Radiation side effects can:

- Start part way through your treatment
- Stop a few weeks after your treatment ends

If you have any side effects, or need to ask a question, talk to your Health Care Team.

### Fatigue

Fatigue (feeling tired) is the most common side effect people with cancer feel. This is normal. Fatigue can become worse during radiation therapy. You may feel weak or have low interest in daily tasks.

## Skin Changes

Radiation passes through your skin. Your skin may:

- Feel warm
- Be itchy
- Look red (like a sunburn)

After your treatment is done, the changes to your skin may get worse before they get better. This is normal. It will take time for your skin to heal.

## Changes to Body Image

Cancer and its treatments can change how you look and the way you feel about your body. You may be worried about how others see you. This can affect your relationships.

## Depression or Anxiety

Cancer and its treatment can lead to depression and/or anxiety. Depression is when you feel sad for a long time, making it hard to live your life. Anxiety is when you often feel worry, fear or are nervous.

## Learn How To Manage Side Effects

Visit the J. Wesley Graham Patient & Family Resource Centre to get a printed copy of a Cancer Care Ontario Symptom Management Guide. You can also scan or click the links below to access online:



How to Manage Anxiety



Skin Care During Radiation Therapy



How to Manage Depression



How to Manage Fatigue



Intimacy & Sex

Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other Healthcare professionals.

