



Ways to Manage Side Effects: Head Radiotherapy

High energy X-ray can kill or slow the growth of cancer cells, but the nearby healthy tissues will also be affected. Damage to healthy tissues can cause side effects. The type and degree of side effects depend mainly on the radiation dose prescribed and the area of treatment. Side effects do not usually happen immediately but may develop and persist or even worsen over the course of treatment. After completion of treatment, the possible side effects induced by radiation will gradually subside.

Possible Side Effects of Radiotherapy:

1. Fatigue
2. Skin reaction
 - Reddening or darkening of the skin
 - Sensitive, tender, dry, itchy, and sore
 - Peeling or blistering
3. Hair loss
4. Headaches and Brain swelling
5. Nausea and Vomiting

Management of the Side Effects:

Skin Care

1. Keep the skin of the treatment area dry and clean. Wash the skin with warm water and mild non-perfumed body wash or shampoo. Gently pat dry the skin using a soft towel.
2. Try to keep the radiotherapy markings on your skin. Do not redraw by yourself if they have faded or get blurred. Please tell your radiation therapist if this happens.
3. Do not use hot water, heating pads or ice pads over the treatment area.
4. No bathing, swimming, taking a sauna to reduce irritation to the skin.
5. Do not use non-prescribed cream, lotions, perfume, powder, or deodorants over the treatment area.
6. Avoid using hair dryers, curling irons, and straighteners.
7. Avoid rubbing, scrubbing, or scratching the treatment area.
8. Keep fingernails short to protect your skin from accidental scratching.
9. Avoid shaving treated skin. Use electrical shavers if necessary.
10. Avoid exposing the treatment area to direct sunlight by wearing a hat or using an umbrella.

Others

1. Get plenty of rest to restore energy.
2. Keep a balanced, nutritious diet.
3. Try small frequent meals to improve appetite. Take meal supplements to maintain nutrition if needed.
4. Avoid alcohol and irritating food such as spicy and salty food.
5. If you experience headaches or brain swelling during treatment, please report to your oncologist. You may be prescribed medication (e.g. steroid) to relieve the symptoms.

For any enquiries, please contact your oncologist or our healthcare professionals.