



## Guidelines for patients receiving Radiation Therapy Treatment to the Brain

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Approximately two weeks after your first treatment you may begin to experience side effects or symptoms caused by radiation therapy. These symptoms may continue throughout the treatment period, and gradually disappear during or after you have completed treatment.

The most common side effects in patients receiving radiation therapy are:

### **Skin reactions:**

After 10 to 12 treatments you may develop some irritation and redness which may itch. There are several things you can do to minimize this.

- Wash hair and scalp very gently with baby shampoo, brush or comb very gently.
- Expose the treated area to the air as much as possible during treatment.
- Apply pure Aloe Vera gel to forehead and around ears to diminish sunburn reaction.
- Contact your doctor or nurse when your skin begins to look reddened or tanned and perhaps becomes dry and flaky. A cream or ointment will be recommended.

### **Hair loss:**

Radiation to the scalp can cause loss of hair in the treated area. The hair loss will occur about two weeks after treatment has started. Hair will usually begin to grow again 2 to 3 months after treatment is over. Some patients may find that the new hair grown is thinner or sparser than before and the texture or color may have changed.

#### **Until hair loss occurs**

- Pat dry with a soft towel, avoid hair blowers or dryers.
- Avoid the use of curling irons, curlers, hair bands, clips and hair sprays.
- We encourage you to get a wig before hair loss occurs. This makes it easier to match your hair and you will have it ready when it is needed.

#### **When hair loss occurs:**

- We suggest the use of a scarf, hat or wig in order to protect your scalp from sun or cold.
- Expose the treated area to the air as much as possible. However, while under treatment, avoid exposing the scalp and head to dramatic temperature changes, direct sun or direct heat, including a sun lamp.

### **Fatigue:**

During the last weeks of your treatment session, you may become increasingly tired. Feeling tired is not unusual. Arrange your activities with frequent rest periods. Try to avoid becoming overtired.

### **Changes in blood counts:**

Blood counts will be monitored weekly or more often if large areas of bone marrow are in the treatment field. The radiation affects the body's ability to reproduce white blood cells and platelets (which are made in the bone marrow) at a normal rate. Therefore, a treatment break may be needed to prevent the possibility of infection and bleeding if these counts get too low. If you are receiving both chemotherapy and radiation therapy, you may have to have your counts checked more often. Your doctor or nurse will let you know if your counts are changing and what to do if that happens.

### **Other side effects:**

It is possible that other less common side effects may occur. Tell your doctor or nurse if you notice any decrease in hearing, stuffiness or pain in your ears. They can recommend medication to minimize the discomfort. Remember these side effects are temporary.

### **Medications:**

While you are receiving treatment, your doctor may prescribe a medication (dexamethasone). This medicine decreases the swelling and inflammation caused by the tumor and radiation.

For any questions or clarifications do not hesitate to contact Radiation Therapy Department at 01/364888 extension: 1880