

# CARING FOR YOUR SKIN DURING CANCER TREATMENT

**Skin conditions like rash, itching and dryness are common side effects of cancer treatment. These may be painful or affect your appearance. Your health care team is an important source of information on how to care for your skin during treatment. There are also simple, practical things you can do to keep problems under control.**

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT ANY SKIN CONCERNS YOU HAVE.

If you notice any skin changes, always let your doctor know about them. Many cancer treatments can cause your skin to change and it's important to keep your doctor informed of any treatment side effects you may experience.

## TIPS TO REDUCE THE DISCOMFORT OF A RASH OR DRY SKIN:

**Be gentle with your skin.** Be careful not to scratch, rub or scrub your skin – for example, pat your skin dry after a shower. Wear soft, non-irritating fabrics next to your skin. Avoid using hot or cold packs on treated areas of skin unless your doctor says it's okay. Use alcohol-free, fragrance-free, hypoallergenic moisturizer on your skin.

**Drink plenty of fluids.** This can help keep your skin hydrated. Avoid caffeine or alcohol which can dehydrate you.

**Keep your skin moist.** To reduce skin dryness, shower in lukewarm instead of hot water. Limit showers to one a day. After you shower, put moisturizing lotion on your skin while it's still damp. Look for a moisturizer that's alcohol-free, fragrance-free and hypoallergenic. Apply moisturizer to your skin at least twice a day.



**Protect your skin from the sun.** Some cancer treatments may make your skin more sensitive to the sun. Ask your doctor if you should use sunblock every day. To protect your skin when you go outdoors, wear a broad-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt and long pants.

**Look after your fingernails and toenails.** Sometimes, problems with your nails develop weeks or months into your cancer treatment and may continue after you finish treatment. The skin around your fingernails or toenails may become dry, brittle or cracked, and some of your nails may become ingrown. Try not to bite your nails, and avoid using fake nails or wraps. Wear gloves when you wash dishes or do other chores in the house or yard. Moisturize your hands and feet often. Avoid wearing tight-fitting shoes.

**Try to prevent pressure sores.** If you spend a lot of time lying in bed or sitting in a chair, you may be at risk for pressure sores. Try to avoid lying or sitting in the same position for a long time. Shift your weight or change your position often. Talk to your doctor about being physically active, or if you're unable to walk, move your arms and legs up and down and back and forth.

**Tell a doctor or nurse right away if you feel pain or burning during chemotherapy.** Chemotherapy drugs that touch the skin can cause pain or burning. If you feel pain or burning during intravenous (within a vein ) treatment, tell a doctor or nurse right away. Be sure to follow any instructions the doctor or nurse gives you on how to care for your skin when you are at home.



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include case management, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

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