

CHEM Center for Radiation Oncology

Management of Common Side Effects During Treatment

The side effects of your radiation therapy have been explained to you by your radiation oncologist. Listed below are the more common side effects of your therapy. These side effects do not occur immediately, but may develop as your treatments progress.

- **Bowel irritation:** Radiation treatments to the pelvic area may cause more frequent softer stools, diarrhea, and mild abdominal cramping. These side effects occur after approximately two weeks of treatment. We recommend that a **low fat, low fiber diet** be followed once bowel symptoms appear. We will provide you with a copy of this diet.

Please inform your physician or nurse as soon as you become aware of changes in your bowel habits. Medications are available to control loose stools.

- **Bladder Irritation:** You may experience increased frequency, urgency, or a burning sensation when urinating. Inform your physician or nurse should these symptoms develop. **Increasing** your fluid intake helps to relieve symptoms related to bladder irritation.

**Decrease** fluid intake after the evening meal if frequency is a problem during the night.

- **Skin Irritation:** Skin fold of the rectum and groin are particularly vulnerable to irritation. The skin in the area being treated may become reddened, dry and itchy. Be gently with you skin. You may shower or bathe with mild soap and warm water. Do not apply lotions, ointments or powders to the area being treated without first consulting with your physician or nurse.
- **Fatigue:** As your treatments progress you may experience a mild to moderate fatigue. Plan your activities according to the way you feel. Rest if you are tired.
- **Nutrition:** Good nutrition helps decrease fatigue and speed your recovery from radiation therapy.
- **Lab Work:** During your treatments we will be requesting occasional blood tests. Please inform us if you are having blood tested for another physician so that we may coordinate our requests.

**CHEM CENTER FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY**

**END OF TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

- **Bowel/Bladder Symptoms:** The side effects associated with your radiation therapy should begin to resolve in the weeks following completion of your treatments. You should continue to follow the low fat, low fiber diet recommended if frequent loose stools persist. As bowel symptoms improve you may gradually reintroduce foods you have been avoiding during therapy. Continue to take medication for diarrhea as needed. Report to your physician if bowel or urinary symptoms worsen after completion of your treatments.
- **Fatigue:** Fatigue may continue for **several weeks** following completion of your treatments. Plan your activities according to the way you feel. Rest if you are tired.
- **Diet:** It is important to eat well-balanced meals even though your treatments are completed. Good nutrition helps speed the recovery process. Report decreased appetite, progressive weight loss to your physician.
- **Skin Care:** Continue to be gentle with your skin in the weeks following completion of your treatments. Report development of moist, open areas to your CHEM physician or nurse.

**Follow-up appointments:** Routine follow-up appointments with your radiation oncologist will be scheduled. Your first appointment will be one month after your last treatments. If you have not already scheduled this appointment, please do so.

Now is the time to notify other physicians involved in your care of the completion of your radiation treatments.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your recovery do not hesitate to call the CHEM Center (781- 279-0655).