



CANCERcare®

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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.



Here are some tips for managing skin conditions caused by cancer treatment:

Be gentle with your skin. Use skin cleansing products made for sensitive skin. These products are usually fragrance-free and alcohol-free. There are also special skin care products made for people going through cancer treatment. 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. Drink plenty of fluids to keep your skin hydrated.

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 "non-comedogenic" – that means it won't clog your pores. Apply moisturizer to your skin at least twice a day.

Protect your skin from the sun. Some drugs used in cancer treatment 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.

Take care of a skin rash. You may get an acne-like rash on your face, scalp, chest or elsewhere on your body. Your doctor can prescribe a cream to put on the rash. Be sure to use the cream exactly as your doctor directs. For a severe or persistent rash, an antibiotic or an acne medication may be prescribed. Ask your doctor about taking a pain-reliever if the rash is painful or an antihistamine if it's itchy.

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. Talk to your

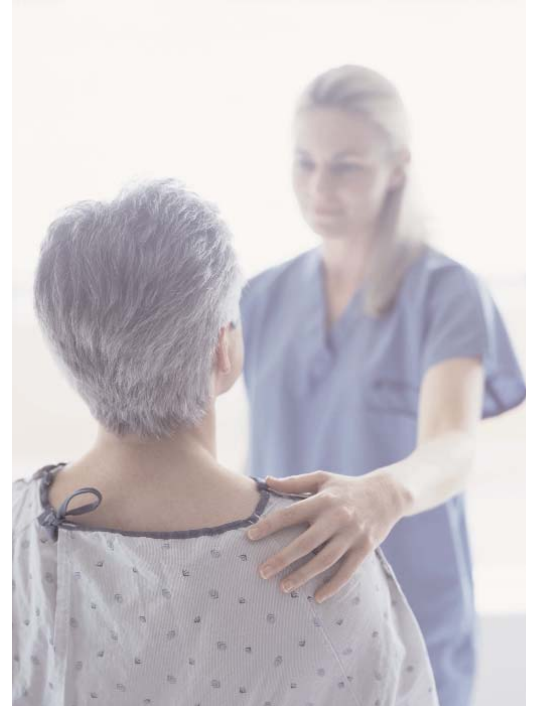
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doctor before having a manicure. Wear gloves when you wash dishes or do other chores in the house or yard. Moisturize your hands and feet often. At night, try putting a coat of petroleum jelly on your hands and feet, then cover them with cotton gloves and socks. 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. Be as active as possible – go for walks, 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. Sometimes, drugs that are injected into a vein may leak out and cause skin damage. If you feel pain or burning during intravenous treatment, tell a doctor or nurse right away. He or she will most likely stop the treatment and clean the affected area. Be sure to follow any instructions the doctor or nurse gives you on how to care for the wound when you are at home.

Talk to your doctor about any skin concerns you have. If you notice any skin changes, always let your doctor know about them. With some newer cancer treatments, a rash or other skin side effect may be a sign that the treatment is working. In any case, your doctor can suggest ways to treat the skin condition and reduce your pain or discomfort.



CancerCare® Can Help

CancerCare's professional oncology social workers are available to help you cope with the side effects of cancer treatment. Our services, which include counseling, support groups, education, and financial assistance, are *completely free of charge*. To learn more about how we help, call us at **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit www.cancer.org.



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