

**If you notice any of the following changes in your skin contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist immediately:**

- An increase in redness, swelling, or pain
- A sudden change in colour of the wound fluid (remember green/yellow is normal)
- If the amount of wound fluid increases substantially

## Swimming

It is best to avoid swimming for 2–3 weeks after treatment or until your skin is back to normal as the chlorine may irritate your skin.

## Sun exposure

Your skin will always be more sensitive to the sun particularly for the first 12 months after radiotherapy; therefore you should protect the area from the sun. Either keep the area treated covered or use a high factor sunblock (at least 50 SPF) and wear a wide-brimmed hat.

The use of sunbeds is not advisable.

## Hair loss

If hair loss has occurred in the treatment area, this will usually start to grow back in 1–2 months. However, the speed and extent of hair regrowth can vary greatly from person to person so it may be longer in some cases. Ask your

doctor for advice.

## Follow-up appointments

For several weeks after you have finished treatment you will be seen in clinic by your doctor. When your side effects have subsided your oncologist will then refer you back to your surgeon for future follow-up appointments.

Follow-up appointments will continue for months/years. During these appointments it is important that you mention any side effects or problems that have occurred since completing your treatment. This enables your medical team to optimally manage any late side effects.

If any problems arise that you are concerned about in any way, consult your Head and Neck CNS or radiographer.

**Radiotherapy Reception  
contact number – 0121 371 5081**

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**Advice to patients  
on completion of  
their radiotherapy to  
the face, mouth or  
neck**

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When you have finished your radiotherapy, treatment continues to work for another 10–14 days. Side effects and reactions should then gradually start to subside. It can take a couple of months before you feel well in yourself again. The healing process can be quite lengthy and varies from person to person. Get as much sleep and rest as you need and attempt jobs or exercise only if you feel able.

#### **At the end of a course of radiotherapy:**

- It is usual to lack energy and feel tired
- For skin and mouth to be red and sore
- It is important to make sure you drink enough fluids and maintain nutritional intake.

### **Mouth care**

Your mouth or throat could be very sore for some time after your treatment has finished. Any medication prescribed by the doctor (e.g. painkillers, mouthwashes etc) should be continued until the soreness subsides. If you are running out of medication ask your doctor at your follow-up appointment.

If you are suffering any change or loss in taste and have a dry mouth then this could continue for several months. Your doctor can advise you on when this will improve and may prescribe medication to help.

If your voice is affected, try to rest it as much as possible. Any hoarseness or change in your voice may continue for some time. Your doctor should be able to advise you more on this.

Any dental work to be carried out should not be attempted until all treatment reactions have completely subsided. If you are unsure, consult your doctor first. All treatment should take place at the Birmingham Dental Hospital.

### **Difficulty swallowing and loss of appetite**

If you experienced any problems with swallowing it is likely to continue to be uncomfortable to eat for up to eight weeks after the treatment has finished. To make up for eating less it is important to increase the amount of calories and protein in your diet so use full fat products and avoid low fat and low sugar products unless otherwise advised.

Eating small, frequent meals (aim to eat every two hours) may help your appetite to return sooner.

#### **Try the suggestions listed below:**

- Try soft textured foods rather than dry, rough textured foods e.g. milk puddings, soups, mashed potatoes etc
- Always have a drink with food to help wash it down
- Try small portions of food: often a

large meal is likely to overwhelm you

- Take Fortisips as advised by the dietician (continue to arrange supplies from your General Practitioner (GP), pharmacy or Homeward Care)
- Take pain relief 20 minutes prior to eating
- Do not take alcohol – this is harsh and will irritate the area
- Do not smoke cigarettes or pipes

**Most importantly you must take hourly fluids during waking hours**

### **Skin care**

After your treatment has finished, your skin will continue to be more sensitive. Your reaction may worsen for the next 10–14 days before starting to improve.

If your skin is dry, scaly, cracked and painful (erythema/dry desquamation) you may use E45 cream several times a day to moisturise your skin.

If your skin is painful, moist and broken (moist desquamation) then your doctor will prescribe Flamazine cream to help your skin heal and advise on how long you need to use it for.

Most patients find their skin has healed about four weeks after treatment finishes. If the skin has broken, healing may take longer than this. Once your skin feels comfortable and any redness has settled then you may go back to your usual washing routine.