

Your doctors have decided on radiation therapy as part of your treatment plan. You may receive radiation to the abdomen if you have cancer in the digestive tract or in the abdominal cavity, such as esophagus, stomach, pancreas, gall bladder, bowel, or kidney. After your consultation appointment with your radiation oncologist, you will have an appointment for a planning simulation/CT.

### Simulation

A simulation is used to map your treatment site, ensure delivery of the right dose of radiation to the target area, and ensure that tissues near the target area get as little radiation as possible during treatment.

During your simulation, you'll undergo a CT scan in the radiation department. Your skin will be marked by a radiation therapist. These marks will be used to help position you for your daily treatment. Some of these marks will be made with black marker and should not be rubbed off. When bathing or showering, let the water run over them, but do not scrub the marks. Some of the marks will be permanent tattoos that are about the size of a tiny freckle.

Unless instructed otherwise, you may eat and drink as you normally would on the day of your simulation.

During the simulation, you'll be lying in one position for a long time (appointments are about 45-60 min). If you think you will be uncomfortable lying still, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or your usual pain medication prior to your appointment.

Make sure to wear comfortable clothes that are easy to take off because you may need to change into a gown. Do not wear jewelry, powders, or lotions.

### Side Effects

Some people develop side effects from radiation therapy. Which side effects and how severe depend on a number of factors: the area being treated, the dose of radiation, the number of treatments, and your overall health. Below are some side effects you may experience and what you can do if you experience them.

#### **Appetite Loss**

##### **What you can do.**

Notify your doctor or nurse

- They can refer you to see a dietician through Kellogg Cancer Center
- Eat small meals throughout the day
- If you don't feel hungry, set up a schedule to make sure you eat regularly (every 2 hours).
- Add a liquid nutritional supplement to your meals.

#### **Nausea or Vomiting**

##### **What you can do.**

Notify your doctor or nurse

- A medicine to prevent nausea can be prescribed
  - If prescribed, take the anti-nausea medication 1 hour before each treatment
- Eat a light meal before each treatment
- Eat 5-6 small meals a day
- Plan to eat when you feel your best
- Choose:
  - Foods at room temperature or cooler
  - Liquids that are cooled or chilled
  - Dry starchy foods such as toast, crackers, dry cereal, pretzels
  - Yogurt, sherbet, gelatin, popsicles, and clear liquids
  - Broiled or baked chicken without the skin
  - Soft fruits, canned fruits, and vegetables
- Avoid:
  - Foods with strong smells
  - Spicy, fatty, greasy foods
  - Very hot or very cold foods
  - Acidic foods
  - Alcohol

### Heartburn or Pain/Difficulty with Swallowing

#### What you can do.

- Notify your doctor or nurse
  - They may prescribe pain medicine for swallowing or an antacid for heartburn
- Choose:
  - Soft, moist, bland foods
  - Puree foods if needed
  - Small bites and chew well
- Don't eat within 30 minutes of bedtime
- Sit upright for at least 30 minutes after eating

### Diarrhea

\*3 or more watery loose stools per day or mild increase in ostomy output

#### What you can do.

- Begin a low fiber/low residue diet
  - Diet information available from your clinic nurse
- Immodium (loperamide) may be started at an initial dose of 4 mg (2 pills) followed by 2 mg (1 pill) every 4 hours or after every unformed stool (not to exceed 8 pills/16 mg a day).
- Drink plenty of fluids to replace fluid loss from diarrhea

### Skin Reaction

- Dry, flaky skin
- Darkening or reddening to skin
- Blistering and/or Peeling

#### What you can do.

- Notify your doctor or nurse
  - Your doctor may prescribe a prescription cream
- Apply aquaphor to irritated skin
- Bathe or Shower daily with warm water and mild unscented soap
  - Pat dry with a towel
  - Do not rub or scrub area

*(continued)*

- Do not use alcohol or products with alcohol on the irritated area
- Wear loose-fitting, cotton clothing in treatment area
- If your skin itches, don't scratch it. Apply moisturizer instead.
- Don't shave treatment area
- No extreme temperatures (hot or cold) should be applied to the treatment area (this includes hot tubs, hot baths, water bottles, heating pads, ice packs)
- Keep treatment area out of the sun or use SPF 30+
- Hair loss may occur in treatment area

### Fatigue

#### What you can do.

- Plan time to rest or take short naps (10 to 15 min) during the day.
- Try to sleep at least 8 hours every night.
- Plan your daily activities. Do activities that are necessary and most important to you first. Do those when you have the most energy.
- Ask family and friends to help.
- Continue to do light exercise (walking, stretching, yoga).

#### Contact Your Radiation Oncologist or Radiation Nurse if You Have:

- A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Dizziness
- Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, cough, sore throat, body aches, or a fever
- Any new or unusual symptoms

**These guidelines are designed to help you feel your best throughout therapy.  
Talk to your treatment team if you have any questions or concerns.**

**Evanston Hospital: (847) 570-2590**

**Glenbrook Hospital: (847) 657-5950**

**Highland Park Hospital: (847) 480-3908**