

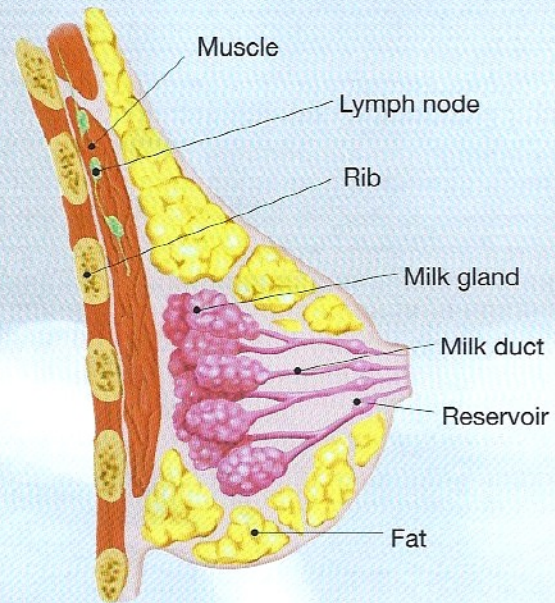
COPING WITH RADIATION THERAPY

WHAT IS RADIATION THERAPY?

Radiation therapy is used as a treatment for many kinds of cancer. The two main goals of radiation therapy are to cure the cancer or to relieve symptoms. Radiation used to relieve symptoms, such as pain, is referred to as palliative therapy.

Radiation therapy is the use of a special kind of energy to kill cancer cells or to damage them to such an extent that they can no longer grow and divide. The most common method is external radiation.

Internal radiation treatment involves the placement of radioactive material directly into tissues or body cavities. It can also be administered orally or intravenously. Internal radiation is often used in combination with external radiation.



WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF RADIATION THERAPY?

The side effects from radiation therapy will vary depending on the area treated and the dose received. Most are usually temporary and will gradually disappear when therapy is complete. Your doctor will explain the side effects that are most likely to occur and help you cope with them. Be sure to keep your doctor informed of any reactions you may experience.

FATIGUE

One of the most common side effects is fatigue or weakness. You should limit activities and rest while the body begins to recover.

SORE MOUTH/EATING PROBLEMS

Irritation of the mouth or gastrointestinal tract membranes can cause discomfort. Loss of appetite, mouth sores, nausea, and diarrhoea may occur. Avoid commercial mouthwashes as some contain ingredients that can irritate. Try eating small, frequent meals. Avoid spicy foods and foods high in fat.

HAIR LOSS

Loss of scalp hair occurs only if radiation is directed to the head. Hair usually grows back following the end of treatment.

SKIN REACTIONS

Skin may become dry, irritated or sensitive. Avoid all cosmetics, creams, lotions, etc. Do not expose the treated area to UV light for at least one year.

OUTLOOK

Once radiation therapy is completed, have regular follow-up examinations with your healthcare professionals.

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