



RADIATION TREATMENT TO THE BRAIN

The following information will help manage the effects you may experience from radiation therapy to the brain. Your treatment team will provide you with any additional information you need. Please ask them any questions you may have.

DURING YOUR TREATMENT

Radiation to the brain may cause swelling. This can lead to a temporary increase in any symptoms already present, as well as drowsiness, restlessness, irritability, confusion, headache, nausea, vomiting or blurred vision. Tell your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist if you experience any of these symptoms or if existing symptoms worsen.

Your doctor may prescribe steroid drugs, such as Decadron[®] (dexamethasone), during your course of treatment to help relieve these symptoms. These drugs may cause some side effects; ask your doctor for more information.

If you have hair in the area being treated, you may lose some or all of it. The dose of radiation will determine the amount and duration of hair loss. Hair loss will occur only in the area treated, usually during the third to fourth week of treatment.

You may want to select a wig or toupee and have it styled before hair loss occurs. Some people prefer to wear scarves or turbans during their course of treatment. If only a portion of the brain is to be treated, you may want to keep your hair long so it can be styled to cover any areas of hair loss.

You may shampoo your hair using only a mild, protein-based shampoo followed by conditioner. Gently pat your hair dry. Discuss this with your doctor or radiation therapists before shampooing.

Only use ointments on your scalp given to you by your nurse, such as Aquaphor[®]. This product is available at Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center at no cost or may be purchased at your pharmacy. Note: Your scalp should be clean and free of ointment when you come for your treatments.

Do not scratch treated skin; applying pressure or using Aquaphor® on your scalp will help relieve itching.

AFTER COMPLETION OF TREATMENT

Protect your scalp from direct sun, wind and cold temperatures by wearing a hat, wig, turban or scarf.

Apply Aquaphor® ointment or baby oil to dry areas three times a day or as needed until your skin appears normal. Do not scratch treated skin until it is healed.

Hair regrowth, if it is going to occur, usually starts within two to three months after completion of therapy, and the hair may be of a slightly different texture or color. Use only a mild protein-based shampoo followed by conditioner for four to six weeks after treatment is completed.

If steroids were prescribed for you during your course of radiation treatment, your doctor will give you a schedule to slowly lower the dosage of steroids until they are discontinued. This will usually take about a month.

AFTER HOURS

If you need immediate emergency medical attention, please dial 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. All other medical attention outside of the Center's regular office hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday) will be answered by our telephone answering service who will have a doctor from Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center return your call.

Hammond: (985) 542-5000

Gonzales: (225) 644-1205

Baton Rouge: (225) 767-0847

Covington: (985) 875-2234

Houma: (985) 876-9045