

Taking Care of Your Skin During Prostate Cancer Treatment

Learn the essential steps to protect your skin, hair and nails during prostate cancer treatments. These simple tips will help you prevent discomfort, recognize common side effects and know when to consult your health care team.

1. The skin is a protective barrier

The skin, the body's largest organ, acts as a protective barrier against the sun, wind, cold, germs and irritants. When it becomes dry or irritated, it is less effective at protecting the body and may cause discomfort.

During prostate cancer treatments, up to 80% of patients experience side effects that affect the skin. It is therefore essential to learn how to protect and soothe your skin to reduce discomfort and improve your quality of life throughout your care journey.

2. A daily routine is essential

Healthy skin can help you better tolerate treatments. Basic skin care should begin early, even before symptoms appear.

An effective skin care routine is based on three simple steps:

- 1) Cleanse the skin 1 to 2 times a day.
- 2) Moisturize the skin every day, ideally after a shower or bath.
- 3) Protect the skin from the sun and irritants.

Products to choose:

- Gentle and hypoallergenic
- Fragrance-free
- Dye-free
- With few additives
- Suitable for sensitive or irritated skin

There is no need to use several products or specific brands. Too many ingredients can increase the risk of irritation.

It is also preferable to limit shaving or use an electric razor to help prevent irritation.

3. Sun protection is vital

Sun protection is very important, as the skin may be more sensitive during treatments and for up to one year afterward.

- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.
- Wear protective clothing, a hat and sunglasses.
- Protect often-forgotten areas: lips, neck, scalp, hands and feet.
- Avoid the sun when it is strongest, especially between noon and 4 p.m.
- Use sun protection even on cloudy days, as UV rays are still present and can damage the skin.

4. Treatments can cause different effects on the skin, hair and nails

Surgery

- Scars after the operation
- Need to cleanse, moisturize and protect scars from the sun
- Avoid friction on the healed area

Radiation therapy

- Redness or a burning sensation in the treated area
- Dry, fragile or peeling skin
- Avoid applying products to the irradiated area before the session, according to the instructions received
- After the session, use soothing or moisturizing products if recommended

Hormone therapy

- Dry skin
- Itching
- Possible skin rashes
- Decrease in body hair
- Increased sweating related to hot flashes

Chemotherapy

- More fragile or irritated skin
- Brittle, ridged or discoloured nails, or nails that may fall off
- Thinner, drier or more brittle hair
- Possible hand-foot syndrome: pain, redness, swelling, burning or tingling in the hands and feet

5. Watch for skin changes

It is important to regularly inspect sensitive areas such as the joints, scalp and skin folds in order to quickly detect any changes and **inform the medical team**, especially if you have:

- Fever
- Significant or unusual redness
- Sudden skin rash
- Blisters
- Skin pain when touched
- Signs of infection
- Itching or irritation that worsens

Black or darker skin may react differently to treatments, which requires increased vigilance and careful monitoring for:

- A change in colour
- An area that becomes darker or lighter
- A change in texture
- New pain or sensitivity

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