

Side Effect Management for Rectal/Anal Cancer Patients

Common Side Effects:

- Frequent urination during the day and night
- Burning sensation with urination
- Difficult or painful urination
- Small amount of blood in urine
- Loose stools or diarrhea
- Painful bowel movements
- Small amount of blood in stools
- Rectal urgency
- Decreased appetite
- Slight rectal leakage
- In women, radiation may irritate the vagina. This can lead to discomfort and discharge.
- Fatigue
- Nausea

Helpful Hints:

- If you experience frequent loose stools or diarrhea, please refer to the Diarrhea Nutrition Therapy handout and begin dietary modifications and Imodium.
- Take prescription nausea medications 30 minutes before radiation treatment if indicated.
- If you have any questions regarding your chemotherapy, your nurse will help you be in touch with your medical oncology team.
- It is important to keep the treatment area clean. Warm water soaks can be soothing and help with hygiene. The baths should be with warm water (not hot) and salt or baking soda may be added to the water (though not required). Soak for approximately 10-15 minutes, then pat the area dry.
- Start using lotion/Aquaphor to the treated area from the start of treatment.
- If your rectum becomes sore, you may use “tucks” (or another product to clean your bottom. Do not rub or irritate the rectal area.

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