

SKIN AND NAIL CHANGES

Cancer treatments can affect your skin and nails. These effects are usually mild but can be worrisome if you are not prepared. Many of these changes can improve and we are here to provide helpful strategies for management.

Skin changes may include:

- Itching
- Dryness
- Redness
- Rashes and peeling
- Hyperpigmentation - A problem that results in dark patches on your skin or a darker skin color.
Dark patches may occur in the following locations:
 - around your joints
 - under your nails
 - in your mouth
 - along the vein used to give you chemotherapy
 - under tape or dressings
 - in your hair

Radiation recall can happen with some chemotherapy. This causes skin in the area where you've had radiation therapy to turn red. The color can range from very light to bright red. Your skin may blister, peel or be very painful. Chemotherapy can make your skin more sensitive to the sun. It is important while on treatment that you avoid direct sunlight. During the summer, the sun tends to be the strongest from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Try to stay inside during these hours.

Some tips to help protect your skin are:

- Use sunscreen with an SPF (skin protection factor) of 30 or higher. Or use ointments that block the sun's rays, such as those containing zinc oxide.
- Keep your lips moist with a lip balm that has an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Wear light-colored pants, long-sleeve cotton shirts and hats with wide brims.
- Do not use tanning beds.

Nail changes may also occur during treatment. Nails may become darker, or become brittle and cracked. Sometimes your nails may loosen, lift from the nailbed, and fall off, but new nails will grow back in.

Things to do to manage skin and nail changes:

- Take quick showers or sponge baths instead of long, hot baths.
- Pat, rather than rub, yourself dry after bathing.
- Wash with a mild, moisturizing soap.
- Put on cream or lotion while your skin is still damp after washing.
Tell your doctor or nurse if this does not help.
- Do not use perfume, cologne or aftershave lotion that has alcohol.

Please discuss any new skin or nail changes you might have with your healthcare team as soon as you notice them.