

Radiation Therapy to the Bones

You are getting radiation to your bones as part of your cancer treatment. This factsheet is about side effects that could happen. It also tells you ways to manage the side effects.

Possible Side Effects

Pain. You may have some pain from the radiation treatments. The pain may get worse before it gets better. Relief from the pain can happen within a few days of starting treatment, toward the end, or one to three months after ending treatment.

Your cancer care team can suggest or prescribe medicines to help with pain. They will check often to make sure your pain is controlled. Please tell your cancer care team if your pain is too much.

Fatigue. Feeling tired, or fatigue, is a common side effect of radiation treatments. Take good care of yourself while you are in treatment. Keep a balance between exercise and rest. If you feel very tired, you may need extra rest. Many patients find that mild exercise such as walking can improve energy levels. Talk to your cancer care team before you begin exercise.

Skin changes. Usually, bone radiation treatments are so few in number that skin changes are minor. Your skin may turn slightly red toward the end of your treatments, or after they are complete.

Radiation therapy can cause skin dryness. Use a clear, white and unscented moisturizing cream, lotion, gel, or oil on radiated skin after you bathe or shower. Your cancer care team can help you choose products that meet your needs.

Do not use lotion right before your radiation treatments. Put it on at least 2 hours before.

Fractures. Having tumors in weight-bearing bones raises your risk of a bone fracture, or broken bone. You should avoid heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling. Take extra care when walking on slippery or uneven surfaces. Here are some signs of a possible broken bone:

- Sudden severe pain that may worsen with movement
- Difficulty moving or using a body part
- Swelling, tenderness, weakness, or numbness in a body part

Call your cancer care team right away if any of these signs happen.

These side effects may go on after your last treatment. If you have concerns, please talk with your cancer care team.