

Some chemotherapy drugs can cause changes to your skin or nails. These changes can include the following:

- Itching, dryness, redness, rashes, and peeling
- Acne-like rash
- Increased sun sensitivity
- Darkened, yellowed, brittle, and cracked nails
- Darkened veins in the area where the chemotherapy goes, if the chemotherapy is given through your vein

Let your doctor or nurse know if you have any of these changes.

Here are some suggestions to help relieve skin problems caused by chemotherapy.

Itching, dryness, redness, rashes, and peeling

- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid long, hot showers. Limit tub baths to less than 30 minutes. Use lukewarm water and mild soap. Gently pat skin dry with a soft towel.
- Avoid soaking in hot tubs or spas. They can increase the risk of infection from bacteria.
- Use a moisturizing lotion for sensitive skin over your entire body. Put it on while your skin is damp from a bath or shower, and reapply often.
- Choose body care and cleaning products (soap, shampoo, lotion, and laundry detergent) that are free of dye, alcohol, and perfume.
- Do not wear perfumes, colognes, and aftershaves.
- Choose loose-fitting clothes and bed sheets made of soft cotton.

Acne-like rash

- Don't use acne skin care products. They can make the rash worse.
- Keep your face clean. Your doctor may recommend medicated creams or soaps.

- Use lotions for sensitive skin. Avoid creams with mineral oil, petrolatum, or lanolin.
- Use SPF 30 or higher sunscreen when outside.
- If you wear makeup, be sure it is for sensitive skin.
- Use a mild shampoo if the rash is on your scalp.
- Do not shave areas that have the rash.

Sun sensitivity

- Avoid direct sunlight. Stay in the shade as much as possible when outdoors.
- Wear protective clothing outdoors, including long pants or skirts, long-sleeved shirts, and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Do not use a tanning bed.
- Use SPF 30 or higher sunscreen every two hours when outdoors. Remember to put it on the back of your neck, the tops of your feet and ears, and the top of your head if you have no hair.
- Use SPF 15 or higher lip balm.

Dark, yellowed, brittle, or cracked nails

- Wear protective gloves when washing dishes, gardening, or doing housework.
- Keep fingernails and toenails clean and trimmed. You may use products that strengthen nails as long as they do not cause irritation.
- Do not bite your nails.
- Do not use artificial nails.
- Do not wear tight-fitting socks and shoes.
- Moisturize your hands and feet often with a lotion or cream for sensitive skin.
- Tell your cancer care team if you have painful, red areas on your fingers or your toes. This may be a sign of infection.