Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

After Your Prostate Radiation Therapy

This information explains what to expect after you complete your prostate radiation.

Follow-up Appointments

After you finish your radiation therapy, you will have follow-up appointments. Your visits will be with your doctor or advanced practice provider (APP). An APP is a healthcare provider with special training who works alone or with your doctor to care for you. For more information about APPs, read *Advanced Practice Providers*.

Your radiation therapy care team will tell you how often to have follow-up visits. It's important to keep your follow-up appointments.

During these visits, you may have follow-up blood tests, such as prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests. You may have follow-up imaging scans or biopsies. They also will help your healthcare provider find and treat any late side effects. These can happen 4 months or longer after

treatment.

Side Effects after Radiation

Urinary and Bowel Changes After Radiation

Radiation therapy can cause permanent urinary and bowel changes. These are changes in how you pee and how you poop that don't go away. Many people don't notice any changes or have any symptoms. However, some people have late side effects.

Late side effects can be like the ones you had during treatment. There's a very small chance you may develop other side effects.

- The opening of your bladder can get narrower.
- You can no longer control your bladder.
- You can have blood in your urine (pee).
- You can have bleeding from your rectum.
- Your rectum can be injured.

These side effects are rare. They may come and go over time, or be constant and chronic (not go away). Your care team will help you manage them.

You may not get any late side effects. But remember that radiation therapy affected the tissues in your bladder and rectum. Call your radiation oncologist (cancer doctor) if

you:

- Have any new urinary, bladder, or bowel symptoms.
- Need to have a colonoscopy. **Avoid having a colonoscopy for the first year after radiation therapy**.
- Need any type of urological or rectal procedure.

Sexual Changes After Radiation

Some people develop sexual changes after radiation therapy, including:

- It's hard to have or keep an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction (ED).
- When you ejaculate, the amount or thickness of your semen is different. Ejaculation is when semen comes out of your penis after reaching orgasm (an intense feeling of pleasure).
- Your orgasms feel different.
- You may not ejaculate when you have an orgasm.

These changes may happen many months or years after radiation therapy. They may be permanent. If you notice any of them, tell your healthcare provider. They can give you a referral to a doctor who treats these problems.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your radiation therapy team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. After 5 p.m., during the weekend, and on holidays, call 212-639-2000. Ask for the radiation oncologist on call.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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