Memorial Sloan Kettering nurse practitioner Carol Ann Milazzo describes side effects commonly associated with radiation therapy to the spine. Radiation can cause patients to feel temporarily fatigued. Because radiation travels through the skin, it may cause the treated area to look and feel sunburned – a condition called radiation dermatitis.

Other common side effects of palliative radiation therapy to the spine may include temporary worsening of back pain, sore throat, heartburn, and nausea, depending on the level of the spine being treated. Patients may want to ask their doctors about how to manage these potential side effects during and immediately after radiation.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your healthcare team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at ____________________. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call____________________. If there’s no number listed, or you’re not sure, call 212-639-2000.