

# Radiation Therapy: What to Expect When Treatments are Finished

You have come to the end of your radiation treatments. There are several things you should know and expect to occur over the upcoming days and weeks.

## When will my side effects from the radiation go away?

Many people continue to have side effects for a few weeks after their treatments. For some people, the side effects can reach their worst (or “peak”) during the first week after their treatments finish. This is because the treatments are continuing to do their work. Although every person is different, the majority of side effects will gradually disappear within 3-4 weeks after your treatments. Continue to care for yourself the same as you were during the treatments until you feel you are back to your old self.

## How should I expect to feel over the coming weeks?

You may feel a variety of emotions when finishing treatment. This is to be expected. You should be given phone numbers and names of contact people who you can get in touch with for help or support. You may even be a little anxious about trying to get back to a normal life. Give yourself lots of time to readjust. Take one day at a time.

## Do I have to come back for a check-up?

Your radiation oncology team will review the follow up plan before your treatments end.

Your follow up appointment should occur in about 6-12 weeks and may be with your medical oncologist, radiation oncologist or your family doctor. You may require testing (blood work or scans) before your follow up appointment. You will be notified once these appointment have been scheduled.

## Will I need to make any changes to my lifestyle?

The radiation treatments may cause long lasting or permanent changes to your body. Your health care team should talk to you about these changes and what you can do to cope with them. The most common change from radiation treatment is skin changes. The skin may be more sensitive to hot or cold sensations, and will definitely be more sensitive to sun exposure. You will have to be very careful to keep the treated area out of the sun completely with the use of clothing and/or hats. You should also wear a high SPF sunscreen. Any tattoos you received for your markings are permanent, so you will have them forever. They may fade with time and turn lighter in colour.

## Questions you may want to ask your Health Care Team

- Will I have any long-term side effects from my treatments?
- How long will my side effects last?
- When can I go back to work?
- What if I need to talk to a member of the health care team after my treatments are over?
- I am nervous and worried about finishing my treatments. Is this normal?
- Do I need to come back for a check-up?
- Will I have any tests done for my check-up?
- What changes do I need to make as a result of my treatments?

**Patient and family feedback is very important to us.**

**We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to [education.cancercare@nshealth.ca](mailto:education.cancercare@nshealth.ca) or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.**

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*It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider.*

*If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.*