Your doctor has recommended radiation to all or part of your lung area. This sheet discusses possible side effects and ways to manage them.

**Possible Side Effects**

**Skin changes.** Side effects to the skin occur only in areas where the radiation enters and exits your body. If you are unsure where your treated areas are, ask your health care team. After a week or two of treatments, your skin will start to become dry. It may darken, turn pink to red, itch, or feel tender. You should take care of your skin from the first day of radiation, before you notice these changes.

Here are some guidelines to help protect your skin:

- Wash skin gently with warm water. Do not scrub. Use your hand rather than a washcloth and pat dry with a soft towel.
- Use a mild soap that is free of perfumes or deodorants.
- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothes. Do not wear tight-fitting clothes that can cause friction.
- Do not use adhesive products such as bandages or tape in the treated area.
- Avoid extreme heat or cold on the skin. Do not use heating pads, ice packs, or hot water bottles on the skin.
- Avoid exposing treated skin to the sun; it will be more sensitive. Use a PABA-free sunscreen with at least SPF 30 when outdoors, wear a wide-brimmed hat, and avoid tanning beds.
- Use only an electric razor if you shave within the treated area.

**Hair loss.** After about two weeks, you will lose hair in the treated area. This may or may not be permanent and depends on the dose of radiation you receive. Hair usually begins to grow back within three to six months after you complete radiation. Ask your health care team if you are concerned. Use only an electric razor if you shave within the treated area.

**Difficulty swallowing and sore throat.** If your esophagus (the tube that passes food to the stomach) is in the area being treated, you may have soreness in your throat. This can make it hard to swallow. You may feel as if you have a lump in your throat. Maintaining your body weight may be difficult. A dietitian on your health care team can help if needed.

**Heartburn.** Sometimes radiation treatments that include the upper abdomen cause heartburn. You may feel as if you have a lump when you swallow or that food sticks in your throat.

- Try changing your diet. Avoid acidic and spicy foods.
- Include softer foods in your diet.
- Liquid supplements such as Ensure® or Carnation Instant Breakfast® can be helpful.
- Try antacids such as Mylanta® or Maalox® or acid blockers such as Zantac® or Pepcid AC®.

**Lung secretions and injury.** Normal lungs produce mucus. This mucus moves up into the throat and is swallowed or coughed out. Radiation treatment makes mucus thicker and harder to remove. If you have this problem, gargle with club soda or a mixture of ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon baking soda in a quart of warm water. You may also have a dry cough. A room humidifier may help. Your health care provider may also prescribe a medicine to help.

- If your skin becomes tender or itchy, try using an over-the-counter, one-percent hydrocortisone cream. If necessary, your health care provider may prescribe a steroid cream.
Nausea. Nausea is possible, but not common, during treatment of the lungs. Your health care provider can prescribe drugs to help with nausea.

Fatigue. Feeling tired is common. Take good care of yourself while you are having treatments. Have periods of rest in your day and eat a well-balanced diet. Mild exercise such as a daily walk can help. Do not exercise if it causes shortness of breath.

Symptoms may go on after your last treatment. If you have any problems, please tell your health care provider about your concerns.