Your doctor suggests radiation to all or part of your brain as part of your cancer treatment. This sheet discusses possible side effects and ways to manage them.

**Possible Side Effects**

**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. Regrowth of hair usually begins within three to six months after you complete radiation.

**Skin changes.** Side effects to the skin occur only where the radiation enters and exits your body. If you are unsure where your treated areas are, ask your health care provider. 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. 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 free from perfumes or deodorants, which can irritate radiated skin.
- Avoid friction to treated skin. Do not wear tight-fitting hats or scarves. Cotton fabrics are the least irritating.
- Do not use adhesive products such as bandages or tape in the treated area.
- Avoid temperature extremes. Do not place heating pads, ice packs, or hot water bottles on the area.
- Avoid exposing treated skin to the sun; it will be more sensitive. Use a PABA-free sunscreen with at least SPF 30 when outdoors and wear a wide-brimmed hat. Avoid tanning beds.
- Use only an electric razor if you shave within the treated area.

These suggestions can help manage skin changes:

- Apply a moisturizing cream, lotion, gel, or oil to radiated skin. Choose products for sensitive skin, and avoid products with perfume or deodorant.
- If a product stings, stop using it.

- 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.

**Ear changes.** Sometimes radiation dries the ear canal. If your ears feel plugged, tell your health care team.

**Upset stomach from steroid use.** You may be taking steroids such as Decadron (dexamethasone) or prednisone. These drugs reduce swelling of the brain and should be taken as instructed. Please tell all your health care providers if you are taking any of these drugs. **These medications should not be stopped without a doctor’s order.** Steroids need to be tapered off, not stopped suddenly.

These drugs may cause upset stomach. Take a daily antacid such as Pepcid®, Zantac®, or another prescribed by your doctor while taking steroid drugs.

**Headache, nausea, or vomiting.** Headache, nausea, or vomiting may happen during your treatment. These may be caused by your disease or by your medicine. Tell your health care provider if you experience these side effects. He or she can decide if you need a change in steroid dose, drugs to reduce nausea, diet changes, or other measures.

**Visual sensations.** Some people report seeing blue or white lights when the treatment machine is turned on. This is a harmless effect of radiation on the optic nerves in the eye.

**Fatigue.** Feeling tired is common. It is important to take good care of yourself while you are in treatment. Many patients find that mild exercise, such as walking, can improve their energy level. However, your level of activity should depend on what you feel like doing. If you feel very tired, you may need extra rest.

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