

Caring for your skin after interventional radiation procedures

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet after receiving X-ray radiation as part of your diagnosis or treatment. This leaflet will give you basic information about radiation and advice on how to care for your skin following your procedure.

Why have I received a dose of radiation?

Your procedure required the use of X-rays to see 'inside' your body, allowing your doctor to perform tasks not otherwise possible.

All radiation exposures have some risks associated with them. For most interventional procedures the risks are small and far outweighed by the benefits to you.

The amount of radiation used varies and will also depend upon the type of procedure carried out.

Some procedures are more complicated than others and may require more radiation.

What are the risks?

Exposure to X-rays during a radiation procedure can result in a skin reaction. The likelihood of this reaction happening depends on the amount of radiation received. The risk of a skin reaction will also depend on other factors such as your skin type and your age.

What to look for?

It is important to remember that some skin reactions following exposure to X-rays may take weeks or years to develop and may not be immediately visible.

The most likely reaction is a reddening of the skin (erythema). The affected area may feel sore and look like sunburn.

Erythema may be visible just a few hours after your procedure and can worsen over the next 10 to 14 days.

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Department

Medical Physics

Review due

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Patient Information

You should check the affected area of skin regularly for at least 1 month after your procedure. You may need to use a mirror to check your back; a friend, carer or family member can help you with this.

Mild cases of erythema should get better within a few weeks but other new skin reactions could start weeks or months afterwards.

Caring for your skin

You can continue to have a bath or shower using a mild/fragrance free soap and warm water.

Try not to rub the affected area; dry the affected skin by patting with a clean towel. Do not use perfumes or talcum powder on the affected skin as they may cause a reaction.

When dressing, try to avoid wearing tight clothing as it can cause friction and irritation to the affected skin.

The skin is also likely to be more sensitive so try to avoid long periods in the sun.

You can apply non-perfumed moisturising creams and lotions to the affected area. Do not continue to apply a cream/lotion if you have a reaction to it.

What to do now?

If you notice a skin reaction either immediately after your procedure or at any point in the future, please contact your GP as soon as possible for advice.

If there is severe reddening or damage to the skin you should contact your GP for advice immediately and mention that you have had an interventional radiation procedure.

Follow up appointment

After some investigations you may have a follow up appointment where your skin will be reviewed. In the meantime, care for your skin as advised in this leaflet.

**Patient
Information**

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please telephone the Radiology Department or the ward you were admitted to for your procedure.

Radiology Departments

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3009

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 6765 or

Tel: 0300 422 3208 (Cardiology patients)

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 8:00pm

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85