



Guide to Chemoradiation Therapy

ROGEL CANCER CENTER
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

1. Do not miss any radiation sessions:

- If you miss even a single radiation treatment, the cancer can become resistant to radiation and the therapy may not work as well.

2. While getting radiation therapy, if you need to go to the Emergency Department only come to the University of Michigan Emergency Department:

- If you need hospitalization, we can give radiation while you are admitted rather than missing doses.
- In the case of a medical emergency such as a heart attack, stroke, or car accident, still go to the nearest ED!

3. While getting radiation therapy, keep well hydrated and sip on water all day:

- Always have a bottle of water at hand and take a sip at least every ten minutes.
- Radiation can make your throat forget how to swallow. As a result, you can have swallowing problems during and after treatment. By drinking fluids frequently during therapy, your risk for swallowing issues is much less.
- Getting cancer treatment puts you at risk for dehydration. If you are not drinking or cannot drink, let us know as you may need IV fluids.

4. Keep eating and stay active during treatment:

- Keep eating while you are getting treatment including supplements (such as protein powder, Boost®, Ensure®).
- If you have too much of a weight loss, we will have you see our Head and Neck Cancer Dietitian. If we cannot keep up your weight with supplements, we may need to place a feeding tube to in order to give you extra calories.

- Stay as active as your body allows you to while getting therapy. People who remain active and maintain their weight do better with cancer treatment than those who do not. Activity also helps you to recover from your treatment more quickly and can help to prevent serious complications such as blood clots in your legs, which can occur from long periods of sitting or lying in a bed.

5. Take pain medications to control your symptoms:

- You may develop throat pain, swelling, and neck pain during radiation which will need to be controlled with pain medications.
- While taking pain medications, be sure to take a daily medication to keep your bowels moving as they can cause constipation. The goal is to move your bowels every day and to keep your stools soft. One option while on pain medications is daily Senna-S[®]. Take Milk of Magnesium[®] daily if you have not had a bowel movement. A laxative may be necessary if you go more than 2-3 days without a bowel movement. Please let your provider know if you are unable to move your bowels for more than 3 days. For more information, please refer to the Rogel Cancer Center “*Constipation Instruction*” handout.

6. Sleep with head of your bed up about 30 degrees while getting therapy:

- Radiation can cause you to aspirate while sleeping, especially if you are taking pain medications.
- Keeping the head of the bed up will keep you from aspirating while sleeping.

7. Appointments during chemoradiation:

- You will have radiation daily (Monday thru Friday) in Radiation Oncology Office.
- If you are receiving chemotherapy as well, you will come to the Infusion Center once a week for infusion prior to going to the Radiation Oncology Office.
- You will be seen by Supportive Care Clinic Nurse Practitioners weekly during chemotherapy to handle any symptoms/side effects that may

come up. They are specialists in pain and symptom control and will change your medications as needed. Please call them if you are having uncontrolled symptoms.

8. Call the clinic with any questions, concerns, or uncontrolled symptoms:

Nurse Practitioners:

Heidi Mason, NP

Mary Beth De Rubeis, NP

During weekdays:

Call Clinic Nurse (Leah Shults, RN): 734-647-8902

After hours:

Call the UM Paging Operator at 734-936-6267 (ask to speak to the Medical Oncology Doctor).

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Author: Paul Swiecicki, MD
Reviewer: Frank Worden, MD

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