

National Cancer Institute

Helping Providers Help Their Patients

# Using the Radiation Therapy Fact Sheets



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health

## About the radiation therapy and side effects fact sheets:

These fact sheets help your patients learn about radiation therapy and ways to manage its side effects. They are designed to support discussions between you and your patient.

The 11 free fact sheets offer practical tips that may enhance your patients' understanding and management of self-care at home. Nine of the fact sheets describe common side effects of radiation therapy. The other two describe two types of radiation therapy.

Easy-to-understand language, engaging quotes, photographs, and questions can help your patients understand and actively participate in their care. The general information in these fact sheets is intended to complement your patients' individualized consultation with you, their health care provider.

See the last two pages of this booklet for a list of available topics and ordering information.

To help your patients learn more about radiation therapy and its side effects, you may also order NCI's booklet, "Radiation Therapy and You."



## Here is what other providers have said about these fact sheets:

"The idea of being able to give an easy-to-understand take-home is a good idea because people retain so little of what is said to them during an anxiety-producing experience."

"I could see us using these with all of our patients—good readers and people who aren't good readers alike. They are also ideal for patients to read ahead of time in the waiting room."

"I like these sheets because they provide talking points for us to use when we speak with patients. The fact sheets also help us make sure we aren't forgetting something."

"The fact sheets help make the experience more personal and encourage patients to ask questions. Often patients don't want to bring up embarrassing issues, and I think the quotes encourage patients to be more open."

Research shows that early side-effect management and pretreatment information may help decrease patients' fears and anxiety and increase understanding of treatment.\*

\* Hofman, et al. 2004. Cancer patients' expectations of experiencing treatment-related side effects. *Cancer*. 101(4):851–857.

## Tips on using the radiation therapy fact sheets in a clinical setting:

### 1. Hand out the relevant fact sheets to your patient.

Talk about the information on the fact sheet while the patient is in your office.

- Discussing these fact sheets during an office visit can increase the patient's likelihood of reading and using them at home.
- When patients understand what to expect during treatment and the actions to take, they will have less anxiety about side effects.
- The fact sheets can be given to patients in the waiting room, at the beginning of the visit, or during the discussion of radiation therapy and its side effects.



### 2. Highlight or circle important information and action steps.

Use a highlighter or a colored pen to draw attention to key information and action steps on each fact sheet.

- This simple act can increase your patient's adherence to the actions you would like him or her to take.

### 3. Use the teach-back technique.

For important behaviors and information, ask your patients to share in their own words what they learn.

- Confirming patient understanding through the teach-back technique has been shown to improve patient recall and comprehension.
- Applying the teach-back technique during the patient consult can help avoid misunderstanding. It can also reduce the time spent educating patients during subsequent visits.

## Radiation Therapy Side Effects Fact Sheets

### Diarrhea

What To Do When You Have Loose Stools (Diarrhea)

### Fatigue

What To Do When You Feel Weak or Tired (Fatigue)

### Hair Loss

What To Do About Hair Loss (Alopecia)

### Mouth or Throat Pain

What To Do When Your Mouth or Throat Hurts

Order the Radiation Therapy and Side Effects Fact Sheets in tear-off pads of 50 sheets or as single copies.

- Please order by title.
- Call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER).
- Or visit us online at [www.cancer.gov/publications](http://www.cancer.gov/publications).



### Nausea and Vomiting

What To Do About Feeling Sick to Your Stomach and Throwing Up (Nausea and Vomiting)

### Sexuality and Fertility (Men)

What Men Can Do About Changes in Sexuality and Fertility

### Sexuality and Fertility (Women)

What Women Can Do About Changes in Sexuality and Fertility

### Skin Problems

What To Do About Mild Skin Changes

### Urination Problems

What To Do About Changes When You Urinate

## Radiation Therapy Fact Sheets

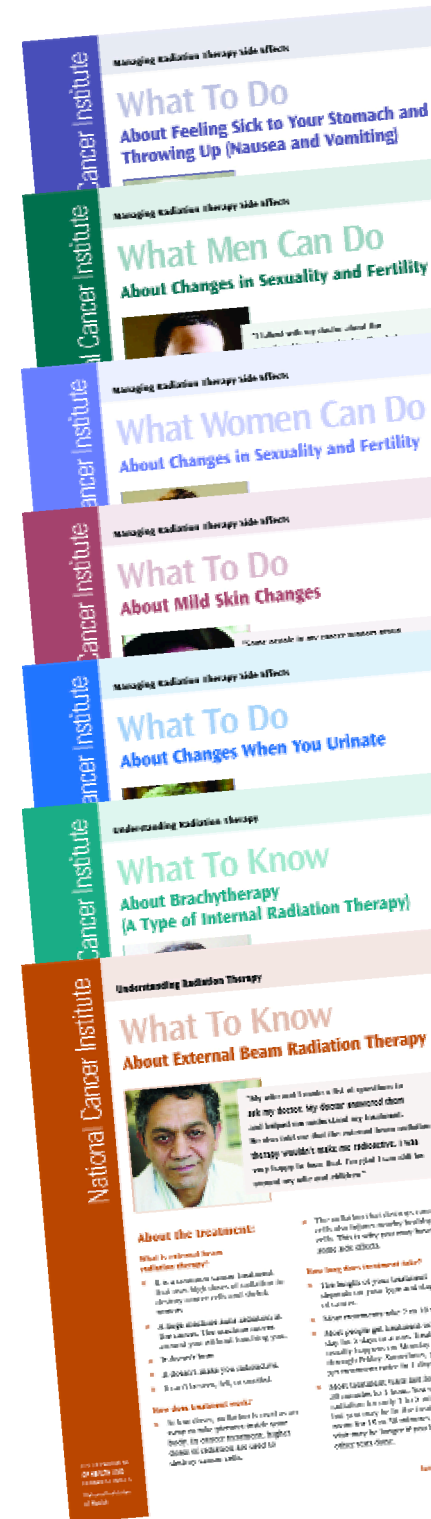
### Brachytherapy

What To Know About Brachytherapy (A Type of Internal Radiation Therapy)

### External Beam Radiation Therapy

What To Know About External Beam Radiation Therapy

**NOTE:** Product or brand names that appear in these fact sheets are for example only. The U.S. Government does not endorse any specific product or brand. If products or brands are not mentioned, it does not mean or imply that they are not satisfactory.



## HOW TO ORDER

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