

RADIATION THERAPY TO THE ABDOMEN

Most Common Side Effects

What You Will Find Inside:

1. What is Radiation Therapy?
2. Where Will I Be Treated On My Body?
3. Common Side Effects
4. Learn How to Manage Side Effects

What is Radiation Therapy?

Radiation therapy works to damage and kill cancer cells. It can also damage healthy cells. This can lead to you having side effects (changes) where your body is being treated.

Where Will I Be Treated On My Body

Radiation therapy can cause side effects in or around the area/organ being treated. When getting radiation to your abdomen, these are the areas that might be affected:

- Stomach
- Liver
- Small and Large Intestines (Bowels)
- Kidneys
- Spleen
- Pancreas
- Gallbladder

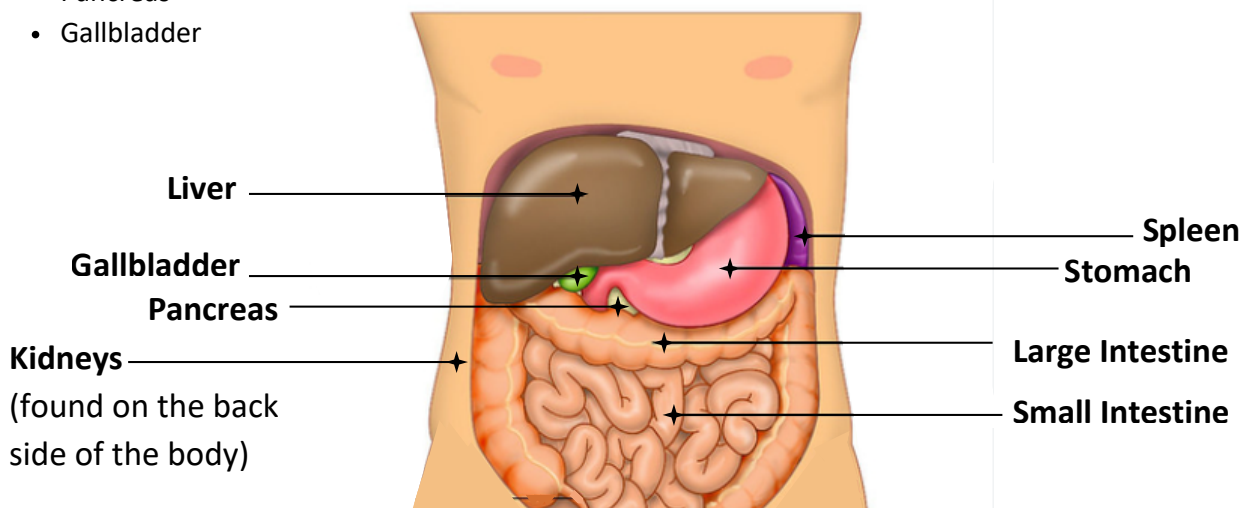


Photo of the abdomen, including: liver, small and large intestine, spleen, pancreas, and gallbladder. The kidneys are not shown here, but are found on the back side of the body.

Common Side Effects

Radiation side effects can:

- Start part way through your treatment
- Stop a few weeks after your treatment ends

If you have any side effects, or need to ask a question, talk to your Healthcare Team.

Nausea and Vomiting

You may get nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up). This can depend on the area that is being treated (e.g. radiation to the stomach).

Nausea may happen at any point in your treatment. If nausea is causing you to eat less or lose weight, you may need help. There are drugs that can help manage your nausea. Your Healthcare Team can also refer you to a Registered Dietitian.

Tell your Healthcare Team if you are not able to manage nausea on your own.

Changes to Bowels

You may get cramps, gas, or some diarrhea (loose, watery poo).

Skin Changes

Radiation passes through your skin. Your skin may:

- Feel warm
- Be itchy
- Look red (like a sunburn)

During your radiation therapy:

- Don't use any creams or powders unless told to by your Radiation Therapy Team
- Wash the area gently with a mild soap

Depression and Anxiety

Cancer and it's treatment can lead to depression or anxiety. There are many signs of depression including feeling:

- Unhappy
- Tearful
- Discouraged
- Hopeless

These feelings are normal for people with cancer. But if they start to get worse, or are hard for you to cope with, let your Healthcare Team know. It is important to get help if you have anxiety or depression.

Fatigue

Fatigue (being tired) is the most common side effect people with cancer experience. Fatigue can become worse during radiation therapy. You may feel weak or have low interest in daily tasks.

Changes to Body Image

Cancer and its treatment can change how you look and the way you feel about your body. You may be worried about how others see you. This can affect your relationships.

Learn How To Manage Side Effects

Visit the J. Wesley Graham Patient & Family Resource Centre to get a printed copy of a Cancer Care Ontario Symptom Management Guide. You can also scan the QR Code or click the links below to access online:



How to Manage
Anxiety



How to Manage
Loss of Appetite



How to Manage
Depression



How to Manage
Nausea and
Vomiting



How to Manage
Fatigue



Intimacy &
Sex

Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other Healthcare professionals.

