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## Radiation to the Head and Neck

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When receiving radiation treatments, you may experience side effects, which your doctor will discuss with you. The side effects vary depending on your tumor and the technique used to treat it. Some side effects may go away over time.

### Common Side Effects

- Skin irritation
- Mouth irritation (dry mouth, sore mouth and throat, thick saliva, difficulty swallowing, change in taste)
- Weight loss
- Fatigue

### What to Avoid During Treatment

- Straight-edged razor
- Pre- or aftershave lotion
- Lotions, ointments, creams or cologne unless directed by your doctor
- Starched collars
- Tobacco products
- Hot or spicy foods (hot coffee, Mexican foods, etc.)
- Foods or drinks that contain acid (tomato, orange, grapefruit, etc.)
- Alcohol or mouthwashes that contain alcohol
- Coarse foods (raw vegetables, crackers, nuts, potato chips, etc.)

### What to Use During Treatment

- Electric razor
- Hard candies to help ease dry mouth
- Soft foods (mashed potatoes, soups, gelatin, pudding, etc.)
- Food supplements (Ensure, Boost, Prosure, Carnation Instant Breakfast) if you are losing weight

### Key Reminders

- Do not wash off your treatment marks.
- Keep the treatment area as dry as possible.
- Use a gentle moisturizing soap, such as Dove or Caress, in the treatment area.
- Do not use a washcloth or loofah sponge inside the treatment area.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of fluid a day to avoid dehydration
- Eat 5-6 small meals rather than 3 big meals
- Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and use fluoride toothpaste

If you experience problems related to side effects, please notify your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist. You may need a prescription to help relieve some of your side effects.