



Every cancer. Every life.™

# Radiation Therapy Side Effects

External radiation therapy uses strong beams of energy to kill cancer cells in a tumor. Radiation therapy can cause side effects if normal cells around the tumor are damaged.

Some side effects are common for anyone getting radiation, like fatigue and skin problems. But other side effects depend on what area of the body gets treated. Radiation therapy to the lung can cause breathing problems. But radiation to the prostate might cause trouble peeing because the bladder is near the prostate.

The side effects listed here often start a week or so after your first treatment. Most get better within a few months after treatment ends, but some can last longer. You won't feel anything during the treatment session. Here are some of the side effects that could develop if you're getting radiation to these body areas.



## Brain

Headaches, hair loss, feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up, hearing loss, skin and scalp changes, or trouble with memory and speech



## Lung, chest, and breast

Sore throat, swallowing problems, not feeling hungry, cough, chest pain, breathing problems, breast soreness or swelling, or arm swelling (lymphedema)



## Stomach, colon, and rectum

Feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up, belly pain or cramps, diarrhea, or constipation



## Skin

Redness, soreness, swelling, dryness, blisters, peeling, pain, itchiness, or hair loss



## Head and neck

Sores in the mouth and throat, dry mouth, trouble swallowing, taste changes, feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up, tooth problems, gum swelling, throat or neck swelling, hair loss on the head and face, or jaw stiffness



## Pelvis (bladder, prostate, cervix, ovary, uterus)

Diarrhea, having trouble peeing or burning when you pee, trouble having children, or sexual problems (pain during sex, low desire for sex, trouble with erections)

Ask your cancer care team which side effects happen most often for your cancer and what you can expect during and after radiation therapy.

To learn more about managing side effects of radiation therapy, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/phm](https://cancer.org/phm) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.



[cancer.org](https://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

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