

Who can I call if I have questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns, please let your health care team know at your next appointment.

If you do not have an appointment coming up:



Monday to Friday 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

- Call the Radiation Nursing Line at 416-480-5000 ext. 81062

After hours on weekdays 4:30 PM - 8:30 AM and on weekends and statutory holidays (24 hours a day)

- Call the After-Hours Telephone Line at 1-877-681-3057

At the Odette Cancer Center, Patient & Family Support offers free services to help you manage eating, stress, worry, financial concerns, changes in health, and daily activities.

Visit the Patient & Family Support offices (T-Wing ground floor, TG 230) or call 416-480-4623.

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Normal Saline Compresses for Radiation Skin Reactions

For patients having radiation treatment

This brochure will give you information about:

- What a normal saline compress is
- When to use a normal saline compress
- How to make a normal saline compress
- How to use a normal saline compress
- Who to call if you have questions or concerns

Notes:

Patient and Family Education



What is a normal saline compress?

A normal saline (salt water) compress (also called a cool compress) is a moist layer of gauze or cloth that you can put on your skin. It can give you comfort and help clean your skin if you have a skin reaction from your radiation treatment.

When should I use a normal saline compress?

Radiation may cause erythema (makes your skin red). Your skin may be dry, flaky, or feel warm. In some cases you can get blisters which may cause your skin to crack or open. You can use a normal saline compress to:

- Soothe your skin and make it feel better.
- Keep any blisters, cracked or open skin clean and help it heal.

How can I make a normal saline compress?

To make your own normal saline you will need:

- A stove or hot plate
- A clean pot with a lid
- A measuring cup and teaspoon
- Table salt and tap water
- Clean container or glass jar with a lid

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Measure 2 cups of tap water and 1 teaspoon of table salt. Pour it into a pot.
3. Turn the stove on. Bring the mixture to a boil.
4. Boil gently for 15 minutes.
5. Turn the stove off and remove the pot from the heat. Let the mixture cool to room temperature.
6. Keep the mixture in the pot or pour it into a clean container or jar. Cover the mixture with a lid. **Throw out any unused mixture after one day. Make a new mixture every day.**

If you do not want to make your own normal saline, you can buy normal saline already made at most drug stores. **Only buy normal saline that has 0.9% concentration.**

How do I put on a saline compress?

To put on your saline compress you will need:

- A package of new gauze squares or a clean cloth
- A clean plate or bowl
- The normal saline mixture

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Open the package of gauze squares. You can use a clean cloth if your skin is not open. Make sure the gauze or cloth is big enough to cover the area where you have a skin reaction.
3. Put the gauze squares or cloth in a clean plate or bowl.
4. Remove the lid from the normal saline mixture. Pour the normal saline (at room temperature) over the gauze squares or cloth. Put the lid back on the mixture when you are done.
5. Put the gauze squares or cloth on your skin for 5 minutes at a time. You can do this 3 to 5 times a day or until your skin has healed.
6. Take the gauze squares or cloth off. Let your skin air dry. **Do not rub the area.**

If you feel stinging or have a lot of discomfort, stop using the saline compress. Let your health care team know at your next appointment.

If you do not have an appointment coming up, contact your health care team.

