



Radiation Treatment Overview Thoracic - GI



During treatment, side effects MAY include:

Common:

- Fatigue
- Difficulty or pain when swallowing
- Red, warm and dry skin with some peeling
- Hair loss in the chest area
- Weight loss

Less Common:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Reduced blood counts
- Dry cough and shortness of breath

Rare but can be serious:

- Difficulty breathing caused by lung changes (inflammation) or narrowing of the airway
- Coughing up blood

After treatment is finished, side effects MAY include:

Common:

- Long-term changes in skin appearance (e.g. darker, lighter or thinner)

Less Common:

- Permanent narrowing or tightness of the esophagus/swallowing tube
- Small amount of scarring on the lung (This rarely affects breathing)

Rare but can be serious:

- Changes to your breathing caused by lung changes (e.g. scarring or inflammation) and/or narrowing of the airway. This may be permanent.
- Pericarditis (irritation of the heart). This causes a rapid heart rate, chest discomfort, or chest pain.
- Myocarditis (irritation of the heart muscle). This causes shortness of breath, chest pain, or permanent heart muscle damage.
- Stomach ulcers. This can be painful and may require surgery.
- Risk of an injury to any part of the body that has received radiation (e.g. spinal cord) during treatment. This may be serious, require major surgery and could be life threatening.
- There is a very low risk that a new cancer will be caused by the radiation in the future.

The severity of these side effects will vary from person to person. If you are having chemotherapy or are smoking during your radiation treatments side effects may be worse. When you begin your radiation treatments, the radiation therapists will give you information to help you manage the side effects. You will also be able to meet with your radiation oncologist during your treatments to talk about any side effects that you may have.

This list may not all apply to your radiation treatment. Please speak to your radiation oncologist to understand what to expect from your treatment.