



## Radiation Treatment Overview Female Pelvis



During treatment, side effects MAY include:

### **Common:**

- Fatigue
- Skin in the buttock, groin and vaginal area may become red, peel or break and cause itching or discomfort in the area. There may be hair loss in the pubic area.
- Increased number of bowel movements or loose and watery bowel movements (diarrhea). There may be small amounts of blood in the stool.
- Feeling like you need to have a bowel movement even if the bowel is empty (tenesmus)
- Bloating, gas, or lower abdominal cramps
- Bladder irritation that may cause increased frequency, urgency, discomfort or small amounts of blood with urination
- Irritation of the anus
- Development or irritation of hemorrhoids
- A new or change in vaginal discharge that may also be bloody
- Reduced blood counts

### **Less Common:**

- Less control of urination and bowel movements
- Urinary block that may need a temporary catheter
- Occasional bleeding from the bladder or rectum (may be large amounts)

After treatment is finished, side effects MAY include:

**Common:**

- Increased number of bowel movements or loose bowel movements. There may be small amounts of blood in the stool.
- Feeling like you need to have a bowel movement even if the bowel is empty (tenesmus)
- Bladder changes that may lead to increased frequency, urgency, discomfort or small amounts of blood with urination
- Long-term changes in skin appearance (e.g. darker, lighter or thinner)
- Vaginal dryness, irritation, and bleeding. The vagina may also become narrower. Using a water-soluble lubricant for sexual activity during treatment is allowed. If you are not sexually active after treatment, your doctor may recommend a vaginal dilator to keep the vagina open. The nurse will instruct you on using it. For the long-term, the vaginal lining may bleed more easily during or after intercourse or after a vaginal examination.
- Radiation to the pelvis may lead to menopause and infertility. You may wish to discuss fertility options and hormone replacement with your doctor before you begin treatment.

**Less Common:**

- Increased risk of developing osteoporosis
- Less control of urination or bowel movements
- Urinary block that may need a temporary catheter
- Occasional bleeding from the bladder or rectum (may be large amounts)

**Rare but can be serious:**

- Damage to the nearby organs such as the intestines, bowel, vagina, and bladder. The damage may include narrowing, blockages, tearing or fistulas (holes) which may require surgery.
- Risk of swelling of the legs or ankles (lymphedema) may occur after radiation. This is more common after major pelvic surgery.
- Increased risk of arthritis in the hips or a pelvic or hip fracture.

- Risk of an injury to any part of the body that has received radiation 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 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.***