

Possible Side Effects

OF RADIATION FOR LUNG CANCER

Side effects are different for everyone. Some patients feel fine during treatment while others may feel uncomfortable.

- **Mild tiredness** may develop. However, tiredness from radiation should improve within a few weeks after radiation treatment ends.
- **Skin irritation** may occur with external beam radiation. Clean the area regularly with mild soap and warm water.
- **Shortness of breath or cough** may be temporary or permanent depending on your cancer and its treatment.
- **Difficulty or pain when swallowing** may develop that will get better a few weeks after treatment is finished.
- **Loss of chest hair** may occur but only in the area being treated.

Very rare long-term potential side effects include rib fracture or a second cancer from the radiation treatment.

Some side effects can be controlled with medications and changes to your diet. Ask your doctor or nurse whether you should make any changes in your diet. Tell them if you experience any discomfort so they can help you feel better.

Visit
www.rtanswers.org
to download a complete
chart of side effects.

Side effects of Lung Cancer Treatment		
Organ System	Acute Complications (Days-Months After Treatment)	Late Complications (Months-Years After Treatment)
General	• Fatigue	• Fatigue • Secondary cancers caused by radiation (Extremely rare)
Skin	• Redness/irritation	• Darkening/turning over treated area
Lungs	• Shortness of breath • Cough	• Shortness of breath • Lung inflammation (often not requiring treatment, but visible on imaging) • Chest wall discomfort • Rib fracture (extremely rare)
Throat	• Soreness or pain when swallowing	• Narrowing of the esophagus causing difficulty swallowing
Digestive	• Nausea	

HELPFUL WEBSITES ON LUNG CANCER

American Lung Association

www.lung.org

Lungcancer.org

www.lungcancer.org

Lung Cancer Alliance

www.lungcanceralliance.org

Lung Cancer Online

www.lungcanceronline.org

Radiation Therapy Answers

www.rtanswers.org

ABOUT THE RADIATION ONCOLOGY TEAM

Radiation oncologists are cancer doctors who also oversee the care of each patient undergoing radiation treatment. Other members of the radiation oncology team include radiation therapists, radiation oncology nurses, medical physicists, dosimetrists, social workers and nutritionists. To locate a radiation oncologist in your area, visit www.rtanswers.org.

ABOUT ASTRO

The American Society for Radiation Oncology is the premier radiation oncology society in the world with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating cancer with radiation therapies. ASTRO's mission is to advance the practice of radiation oncology by promoting excellence in patient care, promoting research and disseminating research results. Visit www.astro.org for more information.

LEARNING ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

The medical profession is always looking for new ways to treat and cure cancer through studies called clinical trials. Today's lung cancer radiation therapy treatments are the result of clinical trials completed in the past proving that radiation therapy kills cancer cells and is safe long term. For more information on clinical trials, ask your doctor or visit: www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials.

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Radiation Therapy for Lung Cancer



Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in men and women, it is the number one cause of death from cancer each year in both men and women. According to the American Cancer Society, 224,390 Americans will be diagnosed with lung cancer this year. Cigarette smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer. Exposure to asbestos, radon, environmental factors and secondhand smoke can also cause lung cancer.

