

# Side Effects: Pancreatic Cancer Treatment

Radiation therapy for pancreatic cancer can cause side effects. A side effect is a negative or unwanted reaction to treatment. Most side effects come on slowly, usually side effects begin 1-2 weeks into treatment, and last for a few weeks after radiation therapy ends.

## COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

### NAUSEA

Radiation therapy can make you nauseous (feeling like you need to vomit). It usually occurs up to 2 hours after your first radiation treatment session ends. Taking an anti-nausea medication 30 to 60 minutes before your radiation treatment may help you feel less nauseous. For more tips on managing your nausea, ask your care team for the How to Manage Nausea at Home handout.

### DIARRHEA

You may experience diarrhea (loose, watery stools) after your radiation treatment session ends. It usually goes away after you have completed radiation therapy. These suggestions may help:

- Take an anti-diarrhea medicine.
- Follow the BRAT diet by eating simple foods, such as bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast.
- Follow a low fiber, low residue diet (ask your care team for the Low-Fiber, Low-Residue Eating Plan handout).

### FATIGUE

Fatigue, or extreme tiredness, is another common side effect. Fatigue can be managed by eating vegetables, fruits, lean meats and other proteins, drinking six 8-ounce glasses of water, and getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day (with your doctor's approval).

### POOR APPETITE

Even if you don't feel like eating, your body needs you to take in calories and protein. These suggestions may help:

- 1 Drink fluids 30 to 60 minutes before or after meals, but not at mealtime. Fluids take up stomach space for food and make you feel full.
- 2 Eat small, frequent meals (6 to 8 times a day). Eating more often and more slowly is easier on your body than eating 3 large meals.
- 3 Use color and variety to make meals more appealing.
- 4 Have nutritious snacks available to eat when you are hungry.
- 5 Exercise lightly before a meal (with your doctor's approval) to boost your appetite.
- 6 Take advantage of times when you feel hungry by eating.
- 7 Eat your favorite foods at any time of the day.

### WEIGHT LOSS

To combat weight loss, we recommend a power-packing diet, which increases the amount of calories and protein in your food without increasing the amount of food you need to eat. The easiest way to power pack is to add fat and carbohydrates (sugar) to food you already eat. Calories from fat and carbohydrates are necessary for energy. Ask your care team for the Power Packing handout for more information.

## Notes

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