

Skin Care and Oncology Therapies

The Importance of Skincare During Treatments

In recent years, the scientific community and clinical practice have increasingly focused on managing the skin effects of oncology therapies. Radiotherapy and antineoplastic treatments can cause skin damage, significantly impacting a patient's quality of life. The clinical experience of oncologists, radiation therapists, and nursing staff highlights how patient education on proper skincare—before, during, and after treatment—is crucial.

Skincare and Quality of Life

The consistent use of appropriate cosmetics and cosmeceuticals during treatment reduces the occurrence of skin-related adverse events and facilitates their management.

This translates into:

- an improvement in the patient's quality of life;
- a reduced need to modify or discontinue treatment;
- greater adherence to the treatment plan.

Skin health is not just a matter of aesthetics: the skin and the central nervous system share the same embryonic origin, and skin damage has been shown to influence psychological experiences. Lesions, dryness, and discomfort become visible signs of disease, impacting self-esteem, social relationships, and self-perception, self-esteem, social relationships, and self-perception.

How skin changes during treatment

The skin of patients undergoing cancer treatments is more fragile, sensitive, and particularly compromised. For this reason, it requires specific care, including:

- avoid cosmetics with sensitizing substances, perfumes, preservatives that can cause allergies, and harsh detergents;
- prefer dermatological products designed for sensitive, fragile, or disease-prone skin;
- favor emollients that support the skin barrier, promote hydration, and reduce itching and discomfort; choose oily, non-foaming cleansers with a physiological pH (5.0-5.5);
- If indicated, supplement the use of high-protection sunscreens, adapted to the season, skin type, and the area of the body being treated.

Good daily practices

In addition to product selection, it is important that patients are instructed to follow simple practical rules to protect their skin during treatment. Here are some examples of what is helpful or preferable to avoid during radiotherapy sessions.

To avoid:

- Prolonged hot baths, saunas, and tanning beds;
- Direct exposure to the sun on irradiated areas;
- Bathing in thermal waters;
- Use of razor blades, aftershave, or alcoholic perfumes on treated areas.

To prefer:

- Short showers with warm water;
- Light-colored clothing made of natural fabrics such as cotton or linen;
- Cotton underwear (especially for breast cancer patients);
- Carefully wash clothes, avoiding fabric softeners and irritating additives, and extra rinses for clothing in direct contact with the skin.

A proactive approach to prevention

A daily skin care protocol—started before therapy and maintained during and after—is a true prevention tool. It ensures a better skin response to treatments, limits the occurrence of adverse events, and improves their management, with an overall positive impact on the oncology journey.

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