



Skin care during and following electron therapy

This information is to help you look after your skin during and on completion of your course of electron therapy.

Electron therapy

This treatment is given using a machine called a linear accelerator. It is used for patients who need treatment to areas just below the surface of the skin.

While your treatment is being planned, the radiographers will draw some pen marks on your skin. Please do not try to wash the marks off as you will make your skin sore. They will gradually fade over a few days.

As these pen marks will fade, the radiographers will, with your consent, replace the pen marks with small tattoos. These are tiny dots made by pinpricking the skin with permanent dye. They will not wash off.

Skin care

The skin in the treatment area may become red and feel a bit sore during your course of treatment. This is a normal side effect, and it may continue to get worse for 10-14 days after your treatment has finished. Your skin will then gradually settle down and become more comfortable.

The following advice will help you to look after your skin:

- Wash the area gently. You will probably find using your hand is more gentle than a sponge or flannel. Using a sponge or flannel may cause the skin to break in the treatment area.
- Pat the skin dry with a soft towel. Try not to rub the skin.
- A mild gentle non-perfumed moisturiser can be used for unbroken skin. This will help to soothe the skin and reduce any itchiness.
- Do not wet shave or use any hair removal products in the treatment area. If you need to shave, only use an electric shaver.

- Do not use aftershave or perfume in the treated area until the skin has returned back to normal.
- If the area being treated is on your head, use a mild shampoo and rinse well.
- If your scalp is feeling sensitive or the skin on your head becomes broken, do not dry with a hair dryer or rub with a towel. Allow your hair to dry naturally.

If the treated skin becomes warm and itchy, the radiographers may suggest you use a gel to cool the area and provide temporary relief (up to six hours). Before using the gel, wash the skin gently and pat dry.

Suitable gels include: **Purilon® Gel**, **Intrasite™ Gel**, **ActiForm® Cool** and **ActivHeal® Hydrogel**. These are usually available from your local pharmacy.

The radiographer may also suggest using a barrier cream such as **Cavilon™**, **Medi Derma-S®** or **Sorbaderm®**.

If the skin has broken down and is moist, an absorbent dressing with a non-adhesive/silicone contact layer can be used, eg, **Silfex®** or **Mepitel®**.

If the wound is painful, a foam dressing with a non-adhesive contact layer such as **PolyMem® foam** can help to reduce pain and discomfort whilst promoting healing.

Please speak to the clinic radiographers for further advice (see overleaf for contact number) or your GP or pharmacist.

Lip and mouth care

If the area being treated is near your lips, or your doctor has said the treatment could affect your mouth, the following additional skin care advice will help you:

- Use Vaseline® on your lips regularly. It is important to keep them moisturised.
- You will be given mouthwash tablets (Tellodont®) to use four times a day.
- If your mouth becomes sore the doctor can prescribe you some soluble pain medication.

Eye care

If the area being treated is near your eye, your eye may become irritated and watery during and after your treatment.

If your eyelids become crusty and difficult to open, bathe the area with sterile water and cotton wool or gauze.

This side effect may continue for a couple of weeks. Please seek medical advice if it becomes worse or if you are concerned.

You should also follow the general skin care advice in this leaflet.

Skin care after treatment

When your treatment finishes, your skin may continue to become more red and sore for the following 10–14 days. It will then gradually start to return to normal.

A scab may form in the treatment area. Do not pick or try to remove the scab; it will come off when it is ready. A new scab may form in its place and this process may continue for a few weeks. This is normal and it will gradually heal.

Once your skin has healed and feels comfortable you resume your normal skin care routine.

If you are going out in the sun, it is important to cover the area that has had treatment as it will be more sensitive to sunlight. If the area that was treated is on your head, you should wear a sunhat to cover the area and use a high SPF factor sun cream.

For further advice or information please contact Mount Vernon Cancer Centre:

Outpatient Nurses: 020 3826 2192
Mon–Fri: 8.30am - 5.30pm

Clinic Radiographers: 020 3826 2612
Mon–Fri: 8.00am - 4.30pm

Other help and support

People who have cancer often say that during their illness they experience a range of emotions. Many find it to be a stressful, anxious and confusing time.

If you would like further information about any aspect of cancer and its treatments, including the supportive services offered at the LJMC, please drop in to the centre or call the Helpline.

The staff at the LJMC work as part of the overall team caring for you and include healthcare professionals and trained volunteers. The centre provides a relaxed setting in which to talk and ask questions.

The LJMC is situated between the main Cancer Centre building and Gate 3 (White Hill).

 **Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre**
... supporting people affected by cancer...

Services offered at the LJMC include:

- Drop-in centre
- Telephone helpline
- Benefits advice*
- Complementary therapies*
- Relaxation classes
- Counselling*
- Look Good...Feel Better™ beauty workshops
- Headwear workshops
- Self-help courses

* These services are only available to NHS patients under the care of an oncologist based at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

Mon-Fri: **9.30am–4.30pm**

Telephone Helpline: **020 3826 2555**

Website: **www.ljmc.org**