

Use of Hydrogel for Radiotherapy Patients

Hydrogel dressings are a special type of wound dressing. They are used on skin that is red, tender, sore, or weepy. These dressings may relieve pain. They do so by covering exposed nerve endings. They keep wounds moist. Moist wounds heal quicker than dry wounds.

These dressings are made up of a clear, gel-like substance with a plastic film layer. Apply to clean skin with clean hands. Pat skin dry with a soft cotton towel. Skin creams are sometimes used with these dressings. Check with your nurse if you are using skin creams.

To apply the dressing, peel back the plastic layer. This will expose the moist, jelly-like substance. The gel side of the dressing is put on the skin.

Keeping these dressings in place can be tricky. **Do not hold in place with tape. Putting tape on treated skin can cause further damage.** The nurses will help you.

Hydrogel dressings work best on flat areas of the body that do not move much. They can remain in place for several hours, even overnight. The skin under these dressings can weep or drain fluids. If this happens, cotton or gauze dressings can be put on top. Most drainage will be milky in color or blood tinged. If drainage is green or yellow, it may be a sign of infection. Other signs of infection include increased redness around the site, pain at the site, and/or fever. Report any of these to the nurse or doctor.

Hydrogel dressings do not work very well in skin folds or areas that move. In these cases, other types of dressings can be used. The nurses will help you with this.

Your skin needs to be clean and dry before your radiation treatment. **Do not** apply any creams on your skin at least two hours before your treatment time. These dressings can go back on after your treatment. The nurses can help you with this.

Who to Call

If you have any questions about your skin, call the clinic between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Ask to speak to a nurse.

UW Hospital Radiation Oncology Clinic
(608) 263-8500

East Clinic Radiation Oncology
(608) 265-4357

After 5:00 pm and on weekends, your phone call will go to the paging operator. Ask for the radiation-therapy doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, please call
1-800-323-8942.