

Rash

■ What is a rash?

A rash is an area of irritated skin. It can be a side effect of some cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy, radiation therapy, or bone marrow/stem cell transplantation. There can be many different symptoms of a rash, including pimples and bumps, redness, tenderness, a feeling of warmth, and/or itching. Rashes tend to be mild to moderate. However, some people have severe rashes that cause major discomfort and changes to their appearance.

■ What should I do if I get a rash?

If you get a rash during cancer treatment, let your doctor know immediately. Don't try to treat it yourself, including with over-the-counter lotions. Avoid scratching it and exposing it to the sun. Your doctor will examine your skin to find out what caused the rash. If the rash produces pus, a sample of the pus may be sent to a laboratory for examination. This helps the doctor figure out the right treatment to prevent infection. Fill out the other side of this fact sheet and bring it to your next appointment. This information can help your health care team make treatment decisions about your rash.



■ How is a rash treated?

For a mild or moderate rash, your doctor may recommend an over-the-counter or prescription-strength corticosteroid cream that you rub into the skin to reduce inflammation. If the rash is severe or covers a large part of the body, your doctor may prescribe a corticosteroid to take by mouth, such as prednisone or dexamethasone (sold under multiple brand names). Your doctor may also recommend an antibiotic cream or an antibiotic taken by mouth to prevent a rash from becoming infected. Over-the-counter pain medications, such as aspirin and acetaminophen, can help reduce pain caused by a rash. Over-the-counter antihistamine pills, such as cetirizine or diphenhydramine, can help with itching. Anti-itch lotions and creams may also help. Ask your doctor for a recommendation. Sometimes, your cancer treatment may be stopped for a short time or adjusted to a lower dose.

If these steps don't work, your doctor may recommend that you see a dermatologist, a doctor who specializes in skin conditions. Rashes generally go away after cancer treatment stops.

■ How can I manage the discomfort from a rash?

- ▶ Wear loose, soft, cotton clothing washed in mild detergent.
- ▶ Use perfume-free, mild soap and skin cleansers; use as little as possible.
- ▶ Keep the rash exposed to the air, when possible.
- ▶ Use a hypoallergenic, cream-based moisturizer to prevent skin dryness.
- ▶ Use lukewarm water when bathing instead of hot water.
- ▶ Pat your skin dry. Don't rub.
- ▶ Do not scratch. Cut your nails short.
- ▶ Avoid shaving over the rash.
- ▶ Avoid sun exposure. When outside, use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher and wear protective clothing.
- ▶ Stay hydrated. Drink about 8 cups of fluids, such as water, a day.
- ▶ Don't use makeup or use less.
- ▶ Don't use acne medications.

Keeping track of your rash

Fill out this page and bring it to your doctor's appointment.

When did your rash start? _____

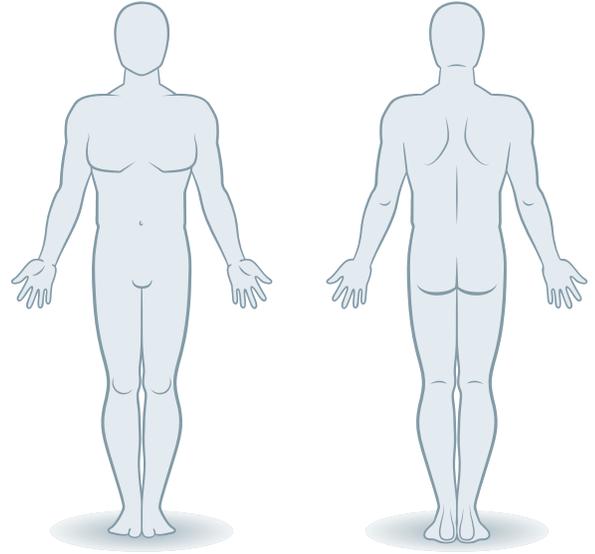
Is the rash spreading or changing? _____

Circle the type(s) of cancer treatment you're receiving:

Chemotherapy Targeted therapy Immunotherapy

Radiation therapy Bone marrow/stem cell transplant

Other _____



Draw a circle where your rash appears.

Describe your rash

Check off the words that best describe your rash.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Itchy | <input type="checkbox"/> Acne-like | <input type="checkbox"/> Rough |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scaly | <input type="checkbox"/> Blistering | <input type="checkbox"/> Flaky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red | <input type="checkbox"/> Crusty | <input type="checkbox"/> Stinging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tingling | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burning | <input type="checkbox"/> Pus-filled | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm | <input type="checkbox"/> Bumpy | |

TIP: Because rashes can change quickly, it helps to bring a few photos of your rash to your appointment.

Which medications are you taking?

For information on skin reactions and other side effects, visit www.cancer.net/sideeffects. Or download Cancer.Net's free mobile app at www.cancer.net/app.

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