

HOW TO MANAGE ESOPHAGITIS DURING RADIATION TREATMENT

What is Esophagitis?

Esophagitis is inflammation and swelling of the lining of the esophagus (the tube leading from the throat to the stomach) and may be a side effect of chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy to the head, neck, and chest area of the body.

What are the symptoms of Esophagitis?

After 2-3 weeks of radiation therapy, you may begin to notice the following:

- Burning sensation in the neck and chest region
- Difficulty eating/drinking
- Difficulty and/or painful swallowing
- If infection present, possible fever, and chills

What are some methods of managing Esophagitis?

- Cut foods into small pieces and chew thoroughly before swallowing
- Eat small amounts at a time
- Avoid hot or spicy foods
- Avoid acidic foods such as tomato sauce and orange juice
- Avoid tough, hard, and/or crunchy foods such as steak and potato chips
- Avoid carbonated beverages and alcohol
- Drink plenty of cool liquids
- Popsicles and water/Italian ice can be soothing on your throat
- Foods that are cold or at room temperature are easier to tolerate
- Eat soft foods that will not distend or stretch the esophagus such as eggs, ice cream, milkshakes, etc.
- Use nutritional supplements to maintain your weight. Consult with a dietitian if you are having difficulty getting in the needed calories to maintain your weight

If your symptoms become unmanageable, please let the team know and the doctor will prescribe medications specifically targeted to help esophagitis. Typically, you will start to notice an improvement in these symptoms about 2 weeks after you're done with treatment, as the tissue begins to heal. In most cases, it will be resolved in 4-6 weeks after treatment is finished.