

CANCER INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

ESOPHAGITIS INSTRUCTION SHEET

Esophagitis, an inflammation of the lining of the esophagus, may be a side effect of radiation therapy to the head, neck, and upper chest area. You may have temporary discomfort because of pain, swelling, or dryness of the throat. Difficulty in swallowing may not lessen while you are still receiving your radiation treatment, but these symptoms will disappear after completion of your treatment. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, consult the radiation therapy nurse or physician. The following tips may help you in managing your discomfort.

- Eat frequent, small meals (six per day). Solid foods should be soft, easy to chew, and cooked until tender. Cut in bite-sized pieces and moisten foods with butter, gravies, sauces, etc.
- Avoid thin liquids which may cause choking or gagging. Use high protein, thick liquids and higher calorie items, such as milkshakes, custard, pudding, macaroni and cheese, etc. Some other soft or liquid-type foods are applesauce, cooked cereals, strained cream soup, mashed potatoes, Jello, rice pudding, etc.
- Using a blender or food processor to puree your food may be helpful.
- Avoid foods that can irritate your throat: Spices such as pepper, chilies, chili powder, nutmeg, curry, cloves, etc. Rough, coarse, or dry foods such as, raw vegetables, crackers, nuts, toast, etc. Spicy or salty foods.
- Avoid citrus fruit and juices such as oranges, grapefruit, cranberry juice.
- Do not use mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Foods are best tolerated at room temperature. Avoid extremely hot foods and liquids.
- Try Ibuprofen (generic for Advil) two tablets as needed up to four times a day, to relieve pain. If necessary, your radiation physician can prescribe a mild pain reliever. * **WARNING: Do not use Ibuprofen without your doctor's approval.**
- It is important to **avoid the use of alcoholic beverages**. Your doctor may also advise you **not to smoke**.
- If your radiation physician recommends the use of an antacid, follow these directions: Take 1 Tbsp. of **liquid** antacid (Mylanta, Maalox, Riopan, etc.) every 2 hours while awake.