

CANCER INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

Dear Patient,

You are receiving this information because you are about to receive radiation therapy to the head and neck area. Many patients undergoing radiation to the head and neck will experience significant side effects. These side effects include: redness/dryness of the skin, decreased saliva production, increased mucous secretions, swelling and soreness of the mouth and esophagus. These side effects make it difficult to maintain adequate fluid and nutritional intake. Your radiation oncology physicians, nurses and dieticians will work with you to manage these side effects to minimize the potential for weight loss, the necessity to take time off from treatment and/or minimize the possibility of an admission to the hospital.

To best accomplish this we recommend the following:

- 1. Weekly visits with the dietician.** The Registered Dietician (RD) will evaluate your current nutrition status and identify your unique nutritional needs. You will be given specific goals for calories, protein and fluid. Our experience has shown that those patients who see a dietician weekly, lose the least amount of weight. This will assist you in maintaining a higher activity level during the course of treatment and assist in your recovery, after treatment has completed. More importantly, this insures the integrity of your prescribed treatment plan. This is a complimentary service of Hoag Cancer Center.
- 2. Placement of a G-Tube.** At the time of consultation your physician will discuss with you the advantages of a G-Tube during the course of your radiation treatment. This is a temporary measure to aid you in maintaining your weight and body fluids during treatment and while recovering. Your radiation oncologist will strongly recommend the placement of this tube in the beginning of treatment for 2 reasons.
 - A.** Placement early will give you the opportunity to become comfortable with the tube, so you will be able to administer the liquid nutritional supplements and fluids needed to meet your unique needs.
 - B.** When a tube is placed later in the treatment course, your overall level of energy and vitality has declined. Any procedure, even a simple one such as the placement of this tube, is more difficult. Should you decide to have a tube placed; the procedure will be performed by a gastroenterologist. Your radiation oncologist and the radiation oncology scheduler will arrange this appointment. The gastroenterologist and his staff will work with you to arrange home health visits to assist you in caring for your tube.
- 3. Weekly MD/RN evaluation.** During the course of your therapy, you will see your Radiation Oncologist and your radiation oncology nurse weekly. Any concerns you may have regarding your radiation therapy, your nutritional status or your G-Tube should be told to the radiation oncologist, nurse or gastroenterologist.