Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) Side Effects (Lung, Liver, Prostate, and Pancreas)

SBRT is a type of external beam radiation that is used to kill cancer cells. It uses fewer treatment days or “fractions” as compared to standard radiation and only a small part of your body is exposed to radiation. You may have side effects during or after SBRT. The type and severity of side effects depend on many things, like:

- Where your tumor is and organs near your tumor.
- The dose of radiation given.
- How many treatments (fractions) you will have.

What are the side effects of SBRT?

Since only a small area of your body is exposed to radiation, there tend to be fewer side effects with SBRT as compared to standard radiation therapy. These side effects are often temporary.

After you are done with radiation, you may feel more tired, which is called fatigue. It is normal and should improve about 3-4 weeks after treatment. You may also have skin issues such as redness, itching, and swelling at the site of radiation. Your provider will tell you how to care for your skin and this should also go away.

There are also some side effects specific to your cancer type.

Lung:

- Cough: You may develop a dry cough after treatment due to inflammation of the lung from radiation. Ask your provider which over-the-counter cough syrup or cough drops can help you manage your cough. If your cough does not get better you should contact your provider.
- Shortness of Breath: You may develop shortness of breath after treatment due to inflammation of the lung from radiation. Call your provider right away if you are feeling short of breath.
- Chest Wall Pain: You may have pain in the chest wall or ribs after treatment. This is caused by inflammation of the nerve endings in the chest wall. This depends on the location of your treatment. Your provider will help you to figure out ways to manage your pain.

Prostate:

- Urinary Irritation: You may have urinary frequency and urgency after treatment. Talk to your provider about management.

Liver and Pancreas:

- Nausea or Diarrhea: You may have nausea or diarrhea after treatment. This is common because the liver is sensitive to radiation. There are many ways to manage nausea and diarrhea such as medications and changes to diet. Ask your provider what may work best for you.

Depending on where your cancer is you may have other side effects. Your team will talk to you about other possible side effects of your treatment.

When should I contact my provider?

Call your provider right away with any new or worsening symptoms, even if it has been weeks or months since your treatment has ended.
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