



CANCER  
INFAMILY  
— build knowledge



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## SKIN AND NAILS

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*This leaflet is about any changes in skin and nails as result of chemotherapy. Ask your doctor if you are at risk of these side effects from treatment.*

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**PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLETS ARE NOT MEANT TO REPLACE THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY YOUR DOCTOR.**

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# Skin and nails changes

During chemo, some patients develop changes in the skin and nails. These include alterations in color, sudden redness, itching, peeling, dryness, sun sensitivity, spots or acne.



*Most of these problems can be solved with a little care:*

## Hygiene

- ✘ Take quick showers using warm water, not hot long baths that dry the skin.
- ✘ Apply body lotion or creams to the hands after showering, while the skin is still wet, and before bedtime. Cover your hands and feet with gloves and cotton socks.
- ✘ Use mild moisturizing soaps.
- ✘ Do not rub your skin. Dry yourself by gently pressing a towel.

- ✘ Do not use perfume, cologne or after-shave lotions. These products usually contain alcohol that dries the skin.
- ✘ Avoid scratching yourself - it will only make the problem worse. If the itching is too unbearable, talk to your doctor or nurse.
- ✘ If you develop acne, try to maintain your skin clean and dry.

## Sun and Wind

- ✘ Some chemicals from chemotherapy can make your skin sensitive to

the sun. Use a sun protector with a factor of 50 or above according to the advice of your doctor or pharmacist.

- × To avoid sun exposure, wear a wide-brimmed hat, clothing with sleeves that cover the whole arm, and pants or long skirts to protect the legs.
- × Use light-colored clothing, which reflect better the sunrays.
- × Protect your skin from the cold and the wind. Wear warm hats and gloves outside.
- × To shield your lips, use a fragrance-free and vitamin-free protector.

### Environment

- × At home keep the moist in the air by lowering the heat, or by placing containers of water next to the heating.

- × Do not keep the same nail varnish for more than 2 or 3 days.
- × Protect your nails and avoid direct contact with detergents or other chemicals by wearing gloves when washing dishes, gardening or other things appliances.



*Most skin problems are not serious, but some have to be treated immediately:*

***For example, if the chemicals used for chemo leak out of the vein, they can cause serious damage.***

***Inform immediately your doctor or nurse if you experience any swelling,***

***pain or burning sensation in the vein(s) or skin when receiving drugs intravenously (IV). These do not necessarily mean that there are problems, but should be checked as once.***



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**Sources:** American Cancer Society, Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic and recent research papers / **Scientific Review:** Maria Rita Dionísio, Médica Oncologista, Fundação Champalimaud / **Content:** Susana Lamas, Catarina Amorim / **Project coordination:** Filipe Santos Silva / **Design:** [www.estudiorjdesign.com](http://www.estudiorjdesign.com) / **Illustrations:** [www.zecardoso.com/](http://www.zecardoso.com/) / **Project by:** Public Awareness of Cancer Unit, IPATIMUP October 2018 / **+ info:** [www.cancronafamilia.org](http://www.cancronafamilia.org)

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