



Late Stage Oropharynx Cancer, Treatment and Side Effects by Dr. Geoffrey Geiger

Typical On-Treatment Side Effects

Week of Radiotherapy	Side Effects that <i>May</i> Occur With Radiation and Chemotherapy Treatments Given Together
Week 1	May develop taste changes - for example, certain foods may not taste normal. The importance of maintaining your weight cannot be overemphasized - it is crucial that you get enough calories before/during/after your treatment.
Week 2	Taste changes / thicker secretions / possibly discomfort in your mouth or throat depending on where you are treated.
Week 3	The thick secretions may increase in your mouth / throat. The discomfort in your mouth / throat may become more uncomfortable.
Week 4	The thick secretions may increase in your mouth / throat. The discomfort in your mouth / throat may start to feel like pain especially when you swallow.
Week 5	The thick secretions will increase in your mouth / throat. The discomfort in your mouth / throat will likely start to feel like pain especially when you swallow. You may experience skin discomfort and your skin over your neck may become red or darker and begin to look like a slight sunburn.
Week 6	The thick secretions will increase in your mouth / throat. The discomfort in your mouth / throat will feel like pain more consistently especially when you swallow. You may experience skin discomfort and possibly breaks in you skin like a severe sunburn. Some skin folds may have breaks in your skin like wet sunburn.
Week 7	The thick secretions will increase in your mouth / throat. The discomfort in your mouth / throat will feel like pain more consistently especially when you swallow. You may experience skin discomfort and possibly breaks in you skin like a severe sunburn. Some skin folds may have breaks in your skin like wet sunburn.

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Dr. Geoffrey

Geiger, University of Pennsylvania, outlines the course of radiotherapy treatment and side effects for head and neck cancer.

[Late Stage Oropharynx Cancer, Treatment and Side Effects Audio Podcast](#)

What you will hear in part 3

- Medications
- Side effects; and
- Side effect management

Glossary of terms you will hear in part 3

For other cancer-related definitions, visit the National Cancer Institute's online glossary at cancer.gov/dictionary.

- **Chemotherapy** – Treatment with drugs that kill cancer cells.
- **Lymph node** – A rounded mass of lymphatic tissue that is surrounded by a capsule of connective tissue. Lymph nodes filter lymph (lymphatic fluid), and they store lymphocytes (white blood cells). They are located along lymphatic vessels. Also called lymph gland.
- **Lymphatic fluid** – The clear fluid that travels through the lymphatic system and carries cells that help fight infections and other diseases. Also called lymph.
- **Radiation therapy/Radiotherapy** – The use of high-energy radiation from x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, protons, and other sources to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may come from a machine outside the body (external-beam radiation therapy), or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells (internal radiation therapy). Systemic radiation therapy uses a radioactive substance, such as a radiolabeled monoclonal antibody, that travels in the blood to tissues throughout the body.

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