



PATIENT EDUCATION

Acute toxicity during pancreas and upper-abdominal radiation

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

Why these effects happen

A pancreas or upper-abdominal field sits near stomach, duodenum, small bowel, and liver. Those linings react with nausea, cramping, and loose stool. The pancreas itself may already be making too little enzyme or insulin. Radiation does not replace enzyme capsules or diabetes care — it can make eating harder for a few weeks.

What often shows up by week

- Weeks 1 to 3: queasy stomach, early fullness, or heartburn.
- Mid-course: cramping, gas, or loose stool after fatty meals.
- Fatigue and a drop in appetite. Some people notice higher or swinging blood sugars.
- If you have a biliary stent, new fever or jaundice is not 'routine radiation.'

Confirm with your care team. Enzyme capsules, anti-nausea pills, and insulin changes must be written by your team. Confirm every new OTC product. A hard, swollen belly plus vomiting is a same-day call.

What you can expect

- Smaller, more frequent meals. The Nausea and Nutrition printouts pair with this sheet.
- Weekly weight and a bowel check.



Self-care and medicine pointers

- Take pancreatic enzymes with meals if they prescribed them — not after you finish eating.
- Anti-nausea medicine on a clock if that is the plan, not only after you vomit.
- Low-fat, smaller plates can be easier. Sip fluids between meals if meals make you full.

Monitor for (named conditions)

- **Radiation gastritis or duodenitis** — burning, early fullness, or vomiting.
- **Radiation enteritis** — cramping and watery stool.
- **Dehydration and unplanned weight loss.**
- **Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency flare** — oily, floating stool, gas, or weight loss despite eating.
- **Hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia** if you have diabetes or are on steroids.
- **Cholangitis or blocked biliary stent** — fever, shaking chills, new yellow eyes, or pale stool.
- **Gastric outlet obstruction** — you vomit old food hours after eating.
- **Neutropenic fever** if you are on chemo.

When to call the clinic vs go to the ER

- Same-day clinic: you cannot keep meals down for a day, oily diarrhea, or sugars you cannot manage.
- ER or 911: fever with jaundice, a hard swollen belly, vomiting blood, or fainting.

Questions to ask

- How many enzyme capsules with each meal?
- What is my stent 'call today' rule?
- Who adjusts insulin this month?

How to schedule or learn more

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