



PATIENT EDUCATION

Sitz bath during pelvic radiation

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

What is a sitz bath?

During radiation, skin around the anus and genitals may become red, sore, and itchy. A sitz bath means sitting so the bottom soaks in a small amount of lukewarm water with baking soda. It can lessen discomfort, soothe skin, and help keep the area clean. Use it only if your care team says it is right for you.

Where you can do it

- A home bathtub, with just enough water to soak the bottom
- A plastic sitz-bath basin that fits over a toilet seat (sold at many drugstores)
- A large clean basin if that is what you have

Confirm with your care team. This is comfort care, not a substitute for calling about fever, spreading redness, or skin that is breaking down. Confirm the schedule with your nurse.

What you can expect

- A common clinic schedule is 3 to 4 times a day and/or after each bowel movement
- The water should feel lukewarm and silky, never hot
- Skin should be patted or air-dried, never rubbed



How to take a sitz bath

- Wash your hands first.
- Fill a plastic sitz bath about two-thirds full with lukewarm water, or use just enough bathtub water to soak the bottom. Do not use hot water.
- Add at least 1 to 2 tablespoons of baking soda, enough that the water feels silky. Do not add bath oils or anything else unless your team says so.
- Soak 10 to 15 minutes.
- Gently pat dry with a clean soft towel, or let the area air-dry. A hairdryer on the cool setting is okay. Do not rub.
- Clean a plastic sitz bath after each use.

What not to do

- Do not use hot water.
- Do not add oils, salts, or other products unless your team wrote them down.
- Do not rub the skin dry.
- Do not wipe raw skin with dry toilet paper. Wash with water and pat dry instead.

When to call the clinic

- Fever, spreading redness, pus, or a new bad smell
- Pain that is sudden or much worse
- You cannot keep the area clean, or the skin is breaking down

Questions to ask

- How many sitz baths a day do you want for me?
- Is baking soda the only additive I should use?
- Should I also use a barrier cream after I dry?
- When would you look at the skin in clinic?

How to schedule or learn more

CureRays Radiation Medicine® 300 Sierra College Drive, Suite 150, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Toll free: (844) CURERAYS / (844) 287-3729 • Office: (530) 802-6400 • office@curerays.com • www.curerays.com

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