



We're in this together!



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS



## TOPICS

# Welcome to Week 8

Click the yellow “Next” button [NEXT ►](#) above if you want to go through the entire Week 8 step by step, or click on a button below to jump directly to a topic of interest.

**Watch this video of Dr. Eileen Shinn, Assistant Professor, MD Anderson Cancer Center, as she introduces the topics this week.**

[Fatigue](#)[Stress Relief for Caregivers](#)[Patient Stories and Tips to Encourage You](#)[Pain and Medicine Side Effects](#)[Feeding Tube Weaning](#)



# Fatigue

---

[Click here to read more about fatigue.](#)

## FATIGUE

# Fatigue

**Your body** is still recovering from radiation. If you are feeling weak or tired, remember that this is completely normal.

**Be sure** to get plenty of rest and keep eating as much as you can.

**Stay focused** on keeping your body healthy to fight off the cancer.

**Remember** that you will regain your strength and energy with time and will once again be back to your normal activities!

**Note: These are general guidelines and tips; always follow your doctor's orders.**



# Pain and Medicine Side Effects

---

[Click here to read more about the side effects from pain and medications.](#)

## PAIN AND MEDICINE SIDE EFFECTS

# Reducing Pain from Mucositis

**Gargle** with baking soda solution.

**Drink** lots of fluids.

**Remember** to use your oral rinses/gels throughout the day (ask your doctor for samples)

**Magic Mouthwash**

**UlcerEase** (Walgreens or CVS)





## PAIN AND MEDICINE SIDE EFFECTS

# Reducing Pain from Swallowing and Mucositis

**These side effects** are very common at this point.

**Talk** with your radiation oncologist, physician assistant or nurse about pain management.

**Your radiation oncologist** can also refer you to a pain management specialist.

**Take pain medicines** one hour before doing your swallowing exercises.



## PAIN AND MEDICINE SIDE EFFECTS

# Constipation Management

**Prune juice:** Drink 1/2 cup every morning

**Hot coffee or tea**

**Ripe papaya** or soft- cooked spinach

**Senna:** Take up to 8 tabs per day, first set of tablets in am, second set in pm); liquid Senna is available by prescription.

**Miralax**

**Keep track** of your bowel movements

If you still develop constipation, do not stop your prescribed medications. Call your doctor if you do not have a bowel movement in 2 days.

Coffee and other caffeinated drinks are not the best choices for hydration during radiation. Try to drink water, herbal tea, or juice instead.



# Stress Relief for Caregivers

---

**Click here to read more about relieve stress specifically for caregivers.**

## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# A Note to Caregivers

**This can be** a difficult week for caregivers as well as patients. If you become angry with your partner, remember to express your feelings at an appropriate time, when the two of you are alone and have time to talk. Express your feelings calmly, and use I statements instead of accusations.

**It is also important** to communicate with people besides your partner. We all need to vent to someone from time to time.

**Do not expect** your loved one to return to normal activity levels at this point. It is perfectly ok if your loved one is still sleeping most of the time. The radiation is still active in the patients body and the patient is still working hard to fight the cancer. However, if you notice that your loved ones energy is not starting to improve 4-6 weeks after treatment has ended, then make an appointment to see the doctor.



**Don't forget** to sleep and to eat and to take care of yourself.

STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Stress Relief for Caregivers

**Watch this video of Dr. Eileen Shinn, Assistant Professor at MD Anderson Cancer Center as she talks about stress relief.**









## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Diaphragmatic Breathing

**Rationale:** Deep breathing is one of the easiest relaxation techniques, however, it is one people don't think to use during times of stress.

## What happens to your breathing when you are stressed?

Your breathing becomes shallow, rapid and occurs high in the chest.

## How is it different when you are relaxed?

When you are relaxed, you breathe more fully, more deeply, and from your abdomen. It is hard to be tense and breathe from the diaphragm.



## Benefits of breathing exercise include:

- **Increased oxygen** supply to the brain and muscles.
- **Efficient excretion** of bodily toxins through the lungs. When you take in an insufficient amount of fresh air, your blood is not properly purified or oxygenated. Waste products that should have been removed are kept in circulation.
- **Reductions** in anxiety, depression, irritability, fatigue, muscle tension.

## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Breathing Awareness Instructions

(Adapted from the Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook. New Harbinger Publications, 1980)

**Lie down** in a comfortable position. (Patients who have difficulty can stay in their chairs).

**Place** your left hand on your chest and your right hand on your abdomen.

**Close** your eyes.

**Pay attention to your breathing.**

Which hand is moving the most? Which seems to rise and fall as you inhale and exhale?

**If it's your chest**, you are not efficiently using the lower part of your lungs.

**If it's your abdomen**, you are more likely to be breathing with your diaphragm.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Deep Breathing Instructions

Stay lying on your back in a comfortable position. Remember, you can practice this sitting in a comfortable chair or lying on a couch or bed.

**Scan** your body for tension. Remember to pause at each area.

**Keep** one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest.

**Start** out by inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth.

**Feel** the breath move through your chest. As you breathe through your nose, once your breath gets to your stomach, concentrate on pushing your abdomen upwards toward the ceiling. The hand on your abdomen should rise higher than your chest. Then slowly exhale through your mouth.



**Each** time you inhale and push your abdomen toward the ceiling, hold your breath for just a second.

**As you exhale**, feel the tension leave your body.

**Keep** your breathing slow and regular.

**To help slow** breathing, some people like to count slowly to 4 as you inhale, and slowly to 4 as you exhale.

**Others** like to say something to themselves like “I am...” “relaxed.”


**Continue** to take long, slow, deep breaths, which raise and lower your abdomen.

**Open** your eyes slowly.

STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Diaphragmatic Breathing Audio

Pick a time that you are feeling stressed, sit in a comfy chair where you won't be interrupted, and listen along. Be prepared to be relaxed.

Click on the play button  at the right to play audio.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Guided Imagery Introduction

**Many people use their imagination to relax.**

Guided imagery is a way to create pleasant and relaxing images in your mind.

Use all your senses, sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell.

This technique can be a good way to treat many stress-related and physical illnesses.

**Guided imagery can be very helpful in relieving anxiety related to your treatment.**





## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Rules for Effective Imagery

**Pick** a comfortable place to sit, without the TV or other interruptions.

**Scan** your body for tension and allow them to relax as fully as you can.

**Form** a mental image of a real or imaginary that is pleasant and calm.

**Involve** all of your senses: Sight, Hearing, Smell, Touch, and Taste. You may want to start with one sense and then add others as the image becomes more detailed.

**If you have trouble** coming up with a situation, you may want to spend time thinking about it, or even write a description of it before doing the guided imagery exercise.

**You may find** it more relaxing if you make statements to yourself that describes your progress and that help you focus on the exercise.






STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

## Guided Imagery Audio

Pick a time if you are feeling stressed, sit in a comfy chair where you won't be interrupted, and listen along. Be prepared to be relaxed.

Click on the play button  at the right to play audio.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Introduction

**Rationale:** Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) training consists of learning to tense then relax various groups of muscles all through the body, while at the same time paying very close and careful attention to the feelings associated with both tension and relaxation.

**The goal of PMR** training is to help you learn to reduce muscle tension in your body far below the normal level at any time you wish to do so!



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Introduction

**Before you begin**, make sure you are seated in a comfortable recliner or lying on a comfortable surface. You may want to begin by doing a few minutes of diaphragmatic breathing.

**For each muscle group**, tense the muscles for about six seconds, and focus on relaxing the muscles for about twenty seconds. Be sure to let all the tension go immediately when you begin to relax the muscles. Remember to take deep, slow, diaphragmatic breaths between muscle groups.

**If you have pain** in one of the following muscle groups that you are asked to tense, skip that group for now until the pain subsides.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

1. You will begin PMR training with your hands and your forearms. Tense the muscles in the right hand and right lower arm while making a tight fist. You should be able to feel the tension in the hand, over the knuckles, and up into the lower arm. Tense the muscles...and relax. Let all the tensions go, focusing on the relaxation.
2. Now, using the muscles of the right biceps, tense these muscles by pushing your elbow down against the arm of the chair or against the floor. Remember to hold the tension for about six seconds and then release the tension immediately. OK, tense now and relax.





## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

3. Tense and relax the muscles of the left hand and lower arm in the same way as you did the right side, by making a tight fist. Tense now... and relax.
4. Tense and relax the muscles of the left biceps just as you did the right by pushing the elbows downward. Tense now...and relax. Focus on the feeling of the relaxed state.
5. Now tense the muscles of the forehead by raising your eyebrows as far as you can. Hold...and then relax. Imagine your forehead muscles becoming smooth and limp.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

6. Now move down to the muscles in the central part of the face. Squint your eyes very tightly and at the same time wrinkle your nose to get tension throughout the central part of your face. Tense now...you should feel tension through the upper part of the cheeks and through the eyes. Now relax. Remember to breathe deeply.
7. Next, tense the muscles in the lower part of the face by biting your teeth together and pulling the corners of your mouth back. Tense now...focus on the feeling of tension in this area...and relax. Let your lips part and allow your jaw to hang loose.





## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

8. Now tense the muscles of the neck. Pull your chin downward toward your chest and at the same time; try to prevent it from actually touching the chest. You should feel just a little bit of shaking and trembling in these muscles as you tense them. OK, tense now...and relax.
9. Now move to the muscles of the chest, the shoulders, and the upper back. You are going to combine quite a few muscles here, so tense these muscles by taking a deep breath, holding it, and at the same time, pulling the shoulder blades together. Pull them and try to make the shoulder blades touch. Tense now...and relax.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

10. Now tense the muscles of the stomach by making these muscles very hard, as if you were going to hit yourself in the stomach. You should feel a good deal of tension and tightness in the stomach area. Tense now... and relax.
11. Now move on to the muscles of the legs and feet. Begin with the right upper leg by tensing the muscle on top of the leg. You should be able to feel the thigh muscle on top get quite hard. Tense now...and relax, letting all the tension go.



## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps

12. Now, tense the muscles of the right calf, or right lower leg. Do so by pulling your toes upward toward your head. You should be able to feel tension all throughout the calf area. OK, tense now...and relax. Remember to breathe deeply.
13. Tense the muscles of the right foot by curling your toes and arching your foot. Tense now... notice the feelings of tension in the foot... and relax.
14. Tense and relax the muscles of the left upper leg just as you had those of the right upper leg by tensing the muscle on top of the leg. Tense now... and relax, letting all of the tension go.





## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Steps


15. Now tense the muscles of the left calf or the left lower leg by pulling your toes upward toward you head. OK, tense now...and relax. Remember to breathe deeply.
16. Tense the muscles of the left foot by curling your toes and arching your foot. Tense now...and relax. Let all the tension go.

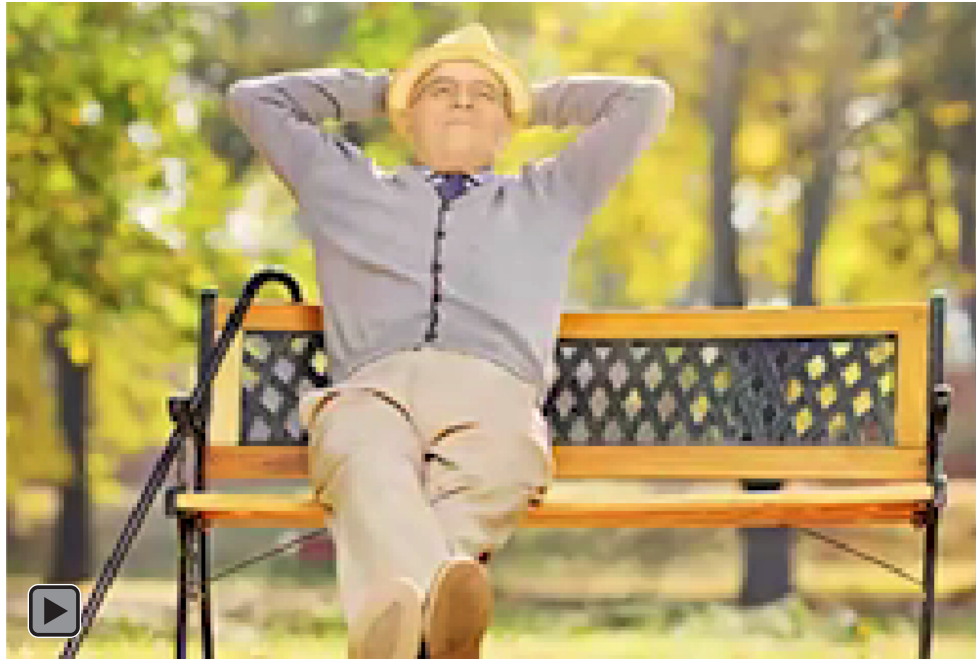


## STRESS RELIEF FOR CAREGIVERS

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Audio

Pick a time if you are feeling stressed, sit in a comfy chair where you won't be interrupted, and listen along. Be prepared to be relaxed.

Click on the play button  at the right to play audio.





# Feeding Tube Weaning

---

[Click here to read more.](#)

FEEDING TUBE WEENING

# Weaning Yourself from the Feeding Tube

**Watch this video from the Office of Patient Education at MD Anderson Cancer Center.**

**Make sure** you have your doctor remove your tube.

**Do not** attempt to remove your tube by yourself.

Weaning & Tube Removal

# Weaning & Tube Removal

---

# What do I do now?

**Keep doing** your swallowing and trismus exercises, and keep swallowing as much as you can!

**Don't be** impatient with yourself. Get all the rest you need!

**Call your doctor** if you have trouble managing pain.

**Take laxatives** regularly. NO Metamucil.

**Determine** what is causing your nausea so you can find a solution.

**Caregivers:** Take care of yourselves, too!

**Try** our destressing technique. Ask for additional help if you need it.



# Patient Stories and Tips to Encourage You

---

[Click here to read stories and tips from other patients.](#)



PATIENT STORIES AND TIPS TO ENCOURAGE YOU

# Patient Quotes and Tips

## Pain

---

“You got to tell yourself, I will get through this. I will get better.”

## Fatigue

---

“Don’t think about what you have to do, think about what you’ve done.”

## Nausea

---

“For nausea, put salt in your baking soda rinse. It helped my husband stop throwing up right away.”

## Attitude

---

“I didn’t come down here with any delusions of it being fun. I just want the cancer gone. Period.”

“The exercises are a pain in the a--. I do a lot of things I don’t like. But I think it’s going to get me to that steak faster if I do them.”

“I can feel the exercises working.”

Former Patients



# Tips for Caregivers from Caregivers

“It is frustrating to cook a meal and hear him say that he doesn’t want to eat. If he can’t eat noodles, then don’t cook noodles because it isn’t going to get better, not for a while yet. Maybe it will just be applesauce or scrambled eggs, but that’s ok. As long as he eats.”

---

“I had to get out of the house every once in a while or else I’d go crazy. It’s ok to ask a relative or friend to stay with him while you get out.”

---

“Go to a buffet restaurant and get soft cooked vegetables to see if he will eat those.”

---

“Sometimes you worry that the rest of your life is going to be spent taking care of an ill person. But you have to remember that this is temporary. One year after radiation was over, my husband and I were sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner, and it was overwhelming, how far we had come.”

---

“You have to be strong and ask for help when you need it. Be honest with yourself, because if you run yourself ragged, you will not be any good to him or yourself.”

---

“None of us can go it alone. Support your team.”

---

“Meet basic needs- pain management, feeding, if you can. If you can’t, then call others for help.”

---

“My advice to caregivers is to just stay in the day. I told myself there is an end to this.”

PATIENT STORIES AND TIPS TO ENCOURAGE YOU

## Patient Quote

### “You Can’t Look Back, You Can’t Change What’s Been.”

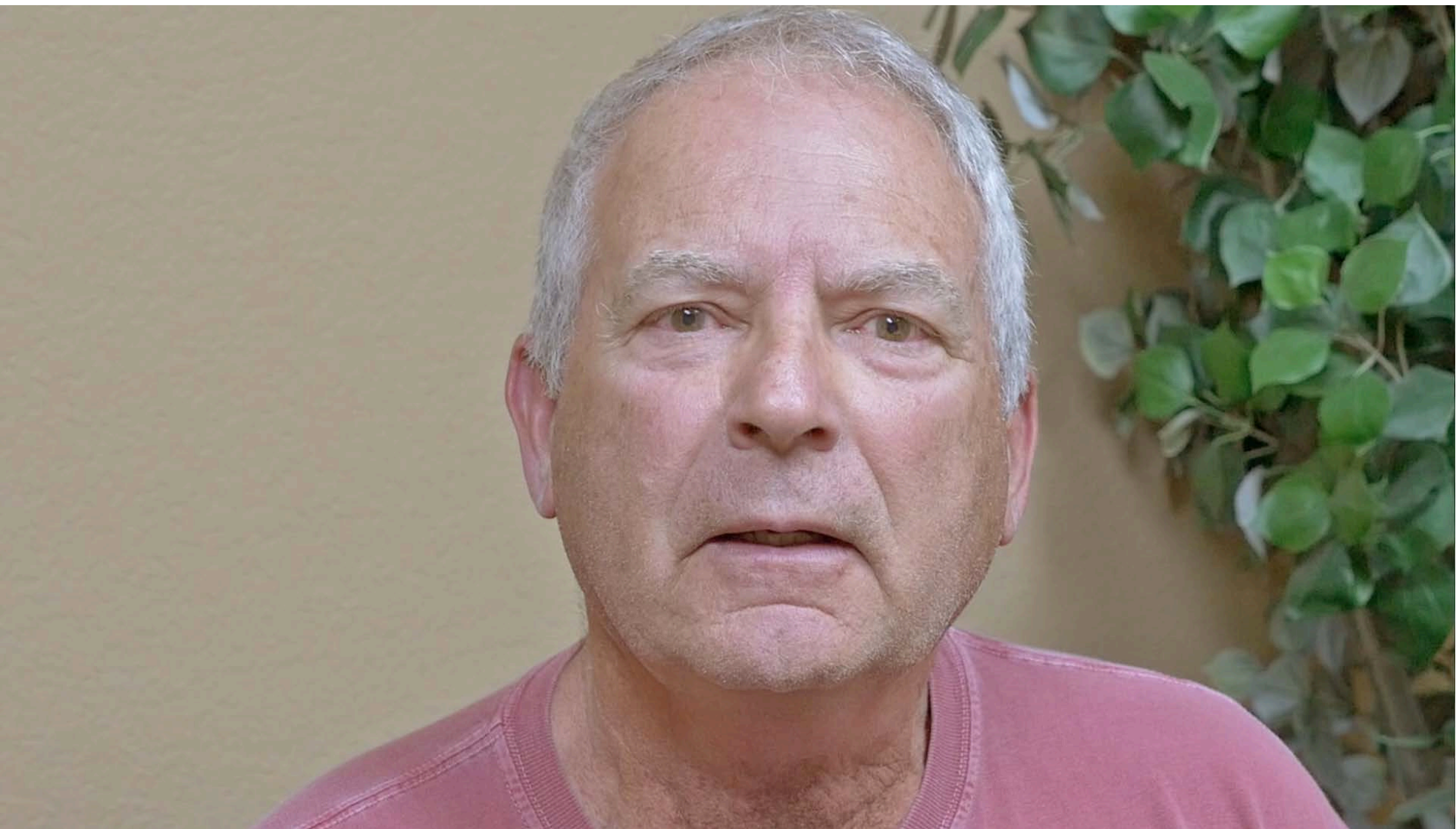
---

“You know you wonder what you could have done, but if you do that you’re looking back and you are not looking forward. You can’t change anything that has happened. Sometimes, stuff just happens. There is nothing you can do about it. You didn’t do anything wrong.

You can’t beat yourself up. You’ve got to stay focused on battling this thing now and beating it. You’ve got to stay strong. If your mind is weak and your spirit is weak, it’s hard for your body to be strong. So my advice to anybody that goes through this is to accept things as they are. Try to be more healthy. Don’t fall into that trap of second guessing and looking back because that is counterproductive. You can’t change what’s been.”

Former Patient





# Index of Topics with Week Numbers

## A letter to head and neck patients (week 1)

### Altered Taste/Dysgeusia

- Strategies to help you (week 3)

## A note to caregivers (weeks 7 and 9)

### Bowel management

- Do not take Metamucil or Citrucel! (week 3)
- What to do if you're constipated (weeks 3, 4, and 7)
- Summary of constipation management (week 7)

### Caring for your skin

- Sunscreen products (weeks 1 and 2)

## Checking for trismus (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

## Constipation management (week 8)

## Communication at home (week 2)

## Congratulations! (week 6)

## Create Eat/ Don't Eat Lists (week 3)

## Dealing with fatigue and nausea (week 7)

## Dehydration (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

### Dental care

- Strategies for dental care (week 2)

## Doubt (week 6)

## Fatigue (weeks 5, 6, 8, and 9)

### Feeding tube

- Help (week 1)
- Introduction (week 1)

## Feeding tube weaning (week 8)

## Fighting with your caregiver (week 2)

## General advice from patients (week 3)

## How to throw up through your feeding tube (week 5)

## Hydration (week 1)

## Importance of hydration (week 1)

## Improving your oral intake (week 3)

- Foods you may enjoy
- Products to increase calorie intake

## Information for caregivers (week 5)

## Instructional videos for swallowing and trismus exercises (week 1)

## Keep swallowing by mouth (week 4)

## Low acid diet (week 1)

## Making a commitment to do your swallowing and trismus exercises (week 1)

## Managing your energy (week 1)

## Mini-relaxation exercise for both patients and caregivers (week 5)

## Mucositis (week 9)

### Nausea

- Commonly prescribed anti-nausea medications (weeks 3 and 5)
- General information about nausea (week 9)
- Thick saliva can cause nausea (week 5)
- Try to determine what is causing nausea (weeks 3 and 5)

## Nutrition (week 1)

## Pain/dryness in radiated skin

- Products for dry and radiated skin (week 3 and 7)
- Should I use cream on my neck before radiation? (week 3)

## Pain (week 5)

## Pain and medicine side effects (week 8)

## Pain from radiation burn (week 9)

## Pain management (week 3)

### Patient Stories

- Difficult journey ahead (week 6)
- Difficulty swallowing due to pain and mucus (week 9)
- Frank's story (week 7)
- Gary's story (week 6)
- Jake's story (week 9)
- John's story (week 3)
- Katy's story (week 4)
- Macho story (week 9)
- Maria's story (week 5)
- Michael's story (week 1)
- Steve's story (week 2)
- Trismus (week 1)
- Unexpected battle (week 7)
- Wearing the mask (week 1)
- You Can't Look Back, You Can't Change What's Been (week 8 and week 10)

### Patient Quotes/Tips

- Advice to caregivers (week 8)



# Index of Topics with Week Numbers

- Attitude (week 8)
- Exercises (week 1)
- Fatigue (week 8)
- Food (week 4)
- General tips (weeks 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9)
- Mouth care (week 3)
- Mucositis (week 3)
- Mucus (week 3)
- Nausea (week 8)
- Pain (week 8)
- Skin care (week 3)

## Preventing constipation

- Do not take Metamucil or Citrucel! (week 2)
- Managing constipation (week 2)
- Medications that cause constipation (weeks 2 and 4)
- Products to combat constipation (weeks 2, 4, and 7)
- Strategies to combat constipation (weeks, 2 and 4)

## Program Wrap-Up: Managing your health

- Congratulations to caregivers! (week 10)
- Congratulations to patients! (week 10)

## Pureed diet

- Foods to avoid on a pureed diet (week 4)
- How to make pureed food (week 4)

## Recipes

- All recipes (week 4)

## Reminder: 6-Month follow up (week 9)

## Resources (week 4)

## Setting goals for yourself (week 6)

### Soft diet (week 4)

- Foods to avoid on a soft diet (week 4)

### Some reminders as you recover at home (week 7)

### Stress relief for patients and caregivers

- A note to caregivers (week 8)
- Breathing Awareness (weeks 2 and 8)
- Diaphragmatic Breathing (weeks 2 and 8)
- Guided Imagery (weeks 2 and 8)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (weeks 2 and 8)
- Rules for Effective Imagery (weeks 2 and 8)

### Swallowing exercises (week 1 and swallowing and trismus exercises PDF)

### Taking care of your skin during treatment (week 2)

### Taking medications through a feeding tube (week 5)

- Taking liquid medication through a feeding tube (week 5)
- Taking pills through a feeding tube (week 5)

### Tell us what you ate (weeks 7 and 9)

### The importance of swallowing exercises (weeks 1 and 2)

### The importance of trismus exercises (weeks 1 and 2)

### Thick saliva and dry mouth (week 2)

- Strategies to fight thick saliva

## Thrush (Candida) vs. Mucositis (weeks 3 and 5)

### Tips and products for mucositis

- Explanation of mucositis (week 3)
- Products for mucositis (weeks 3 and 7)
- Strategies to combat mucositis (week 3 and 7)

### Tips and products for thrush

- Explanation of thrush (week 3)
- Medications to treat thrush (week 3)
- Strategies to combat thrush (week 3)

### Tips for dry mouth

- Explanation of dry mouth (week 3)
- Products for dry mouth (weeks 3 and 7)
- Strategies to combat dry mouth (week 3)
- Tips for dry mouth (week 9)

### Tips for improving oral intake (week 4)

### Track your fluid intake (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

### Track your weight (week 3)

### Trismus exercise (week 1 and swallowing and trismus exercises PDF)

### Unrealistic expectations (week 6)

### Quote from a former patient (week 10)

### What do I do now? (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

### When is my taste coming back? (week 9)

### You can do it! (week 1)

### Your progress (week 9)

- Don't stop your exercises now!