DURING AND AFTER TREATMENT

Skin Toxicities: Common Side Effect

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For skin toxicities, standards of care are based on established evidence-based practice.

Definition

- Cancer treatment–related skin toxicities are a frequent and distressing side effect of antineoplastic therapies, particularly chemotherapy and targeted therapies. Toxicities associated can appear as rashes, hand-foot skin reaction, hand-foot syndrome, and hair loss.

Incidence

- As many as 90% of patients will experience some skin toxicity at some point in their therapy.
- Chronic radiation dermatitis can occur months to years after treatment, manifesting as hyperpigmentation, radiation-induced fibrosis, pain, and increased risk of secondary cutaneous malignancies.

Assessment Tools and Recommended Intervals

- Identify and grade physical symptoms (size of lesions and extent of rash, extent of body surface area affected, presence of inflammation, and signs of infection).
- Subjective assessment includes impact on quality of life, severity (intensity, timing, duration, and characteristics), associated symptoms, distress, and aggravating and relieving factors.

Prevention Measures

- Use mild soap and water for routine bathing, a cream-based moisturizer, and a broad-spectrum sunscreen SPF 30 or higher.
- Educate patients on prevention.

Evidence-Based Interventions and Management

- Use topical corticosteroids and oral antibiotics in addition to usual skin care.
- Antibiotic therapy with tetracycline, minocycline, or doxycycline can be considered in the prophylactic setting for patients on epidermal growth factor receptor inhibitors.
- For individuals receiving multikinase inhibitors at risk for hand-foot skin reaction, use topical urea and topical steroids in addition to usual care.
- For individuals with cancer receiving cytotoxic agents associated with chemotherapy-induced alopecia who are concerned about alopecia, advise scalp cooling to minimize or reduce the symptom severity.

Agents and Interventions to Avoid

- Avoid topical products with fragrances or alcohol, which can dry the skin.

Evidence-Based Resources for Providers

- ONS Guidelines™ for Cancer Treatment–Related Skin Toxicity (www.ons.org/pep/skin-reactions)

Evidence-Based Resources for Patients and Family

- ONS Guidelines™ for Cancer Treatment–Related Skin Toxicity (www.ons.org/pep/skin-reactions)

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