Preface

On any given day, thousands of patients will receive radiation for cancer or other conditions. Most of these patients will experience some degree of skin reaction that may affect quality of life and, if severe enough, result in treatment interruptions. Minimizing the frequency and severity of these reactions is important not only for improving quality of life but to avoid interruptions that could compromise local-regional control. Intervention strategies are divided into those with the goal of preventing a skin reaction and those with the goal of managing a skin reaction. Ideally these strategies are evidence based. However, despite many systematic reviews and meta-analyses, no single best practice has been identified and practice guidelines are lacking. While the armamentarium of available products is rapidly expanding, their use and acceptance in radiation oncology has been slow. For many radiation oncologists, skin care is limited to the use of aloe or an aqueous cream and Domeboro's solution.

This guide documents our clinical experience and observations with radiation skin changes at the University of California, San Francisco. We present the range and frequency of expected reactions, the factors that influence the reactions, and the interventions we employ. We provide evidence where it exists for the intervention. We have included photographs to illustrate the various reactions and their response to our intervention(s). The photographs facilitate identification of the skin changes in the clinic or inpatient unit. Our goal is to provide a framework for patient care in an era of advancing technology and systemic and targeted therapies and to highlight the importance of preventing and managing the side effects of our treatment.

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http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-31458-7

Skin Care in Radiation Oncology
A Practical Guide
Fowble, B.; Yom, S.S.; Yuen, F.; Arron, S. (Eds.)
2016, XII, 238 p. 277 illus. in color., Softcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-31458-7