

Hand-Foot Syndrome Management

Hand-foot syndrome is a side effect of some chemotherapy drugs. Hand-foot syndrome first appears as a slight tingling, burning or itching of the palms of the hands and/or soles of the feet. If it gets worse, the palms or soles may become reddened or mottled in appearance, and may become swollen and painful with blistering and peeling of the skin. In some cases, other areas of the body may be affected, such as the elbows, armpits, groins and other areas where friction or heat may occur. Symptoms of hand-foot syndrome usually do not occur until after you have received several weeks of therapy, but they may occur sooner. Friction, pressure and heat to the hands and feet increase the possibility of this side effect.

To manage or prevent symptoms from occurring:

- Avoid skin exposure to hot water (such as hot dish water, hot baths, etc.). Wear rubber gloves when washing dishes and use warm instead of hot water. Avoid taking very hot showers or baths, and when taking baths avoid soaking your hands and feet in warm-to-hot water for long periods of time.
- Avoid vigorous exercise or activities that may cause pressure and generate heat to the hands or feet. Such activities include chopping hard foods, chopping wood, vigorous digging or gardening, jogging or “power” walking.
- Wear comfortable shoes. In the house keep hands and feet uncovered when possible or wear looser fitting footwear or slippers rather than tight shoes.
- If redness and tenderness develops, soak hands and/or feet in basins of cold water when possible, such as watching television, reading, etc. You may also apply soft gel packs or bags of frozen corn or peas to affected areas.
- Use thick lotions several times a day to keep your skin moisturized. Suggested lotions to try are:
 - Norwegian Formula® hand cream by Neutrogena
 - Or Udderly Smooth® hand cream
 - Both available at many drug stores, also available at www.drugstore.com
- If redness and tenderness occurs, apply Vaseline® or Bag Balm® at bedtime to affected areas and wear socks or cotton gloves:
 - Bag Balm is an ointment compound of petrolatum, lanolin, and a small amount of antiseptic, and is available at a variety of drug stores and fabric stores, also available at many on-line stores.