

NEWS RELEASE



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Palomar Health Wound Care Centers Raise Awareness of Radiation Injuries *Complications may occur years after treatment* *April is National Cancer Control Month*

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – With cancer control in the spotlight this month so is the quality of life for cancer survivors.

At Palomar Health, its two Wound Care Centers provide hyperbaric oxygen treatment to help heal chronic wounds, including radiation tissue damage.

While radiation therapy remains an essential part of treatment for many cancer patients, complications may arise despite the best use of advanced technologies.

Half of the 1.6 million people who will be diagnosed with cancer this year will undergo radiation therapy. According to the American Cancer Society, five percent of these patients will experience severe reactions to radiation treatment.

Palomar Health experts note that radiation therapy complications may not come to light until years after treatment.

“Delayed radiation injury can occur as early as six months after treatment but may also not manifest itself for 20 to 30 years after the radiation treatment,” says Brad Bailey, M.D., FAAEM, FCCWS, UHM/ABEM, co-medical director of the Palomar Health Wound Care and Hyperbaric Centers in Poway and San Marcos.

“Radiation not only kills the cancer cells, but it may also cause progressive damage to the healthy surrounding tissue and those tissues within the radiation field,” Dr. Bailey says.

Dr. Bailey says hyperbaric oxygen is the only therapy known to reverse the vascular compromise and to stop the progressive fibrosis and scarring responsible for late radiation effects. He recommends a thorough review by a hyperbaric physician before being treated for radiation injuries.

“Nothing is a cure-all but hyperbaric oxygen therapy offers 60 to 80 percent of patients either improvement or complete resolution of the injury,” Dr. Bailey says.

Patients receiving hyperbaric oxygen treatments can watch movies while relaxing on a bed incased in a large see-through plastic shell. They are surrounded by 100 percent oxygen at higher-than-normal atmospheric pressure, which enables oxygen molecules to pass through the plasma to the body more easily and speed healing.

Palomar Health Wound Care Centers offer these tips to identify and treat radiation therapy injuries.

- Unlike more typical chronic wounds, soft tissue radiation injuries are usually not as visible. A biopsy is not always practical so all other causes of symptoms need to be considered before a diagnosis is made.
- The most common symptoms that suggest radiation injury are the presence of blood in urine, rectal bleeding, vaginal discharge, tissue or bone breakdown and pain.
- Post-irradiated skin initially may resemble early skin changes consistent with thermal injuries: redness or alterations in pigmentation, itching, wounds caused by excess scratching and pain.
- Areas especially prone to tissue injury are those covering bony prominences, surgical areas and facial areas. Moist skin folds such as those under the breast, the armpit and around the anus and genitals are also vulnerable.
- Bone (mandible) radiation injuries often arise after tooth extraction in patients with prior radiation therapy. The second most common group of patients includes those who have received radiation to treat gynecological, prostate and colon cancer.
- Radiation injuries may occur spontaneously or in response to a traumatic injury or infection. The wounds may appear superficial and the pain associated with these injuries is often the reason a patient seeks treatment.

For more information about treating and preventing chronic wounds, contact [Palomar Wound Care Centers](#) in Poway at 858.613.6255 or in San Marcos at 760.510.7300.

About Palomar Health

Palomar Health is the largest public health-care district by area in California and the most comprehensive health care delivery system in northern San Diego County. It is governed by a publicly-elected board of directors, and its primary service area in Inland North San Diego County has more than 500,000 residents.

A Magnet® recognized health care system, Palomar Health has several facilities, including hospitals and skilled nursing facilities in Escondido and Poway as well as Palomar Health expresscare health centers in Escondido, Rancho Penasquitos and San Elijo Hills in San Marcos in North San Diego County and Temecula in Riverside County.

Palomar Health provides medical services in virtually all fields of medicine, including primary care, heart care, emergency services, trauma, cancer, orthopedics, women's health, rehabilitation, robotic surgery and bariatric surgery.

For more information about Palomar Health, please visit www.PalomarHealth.org.