



Preventing Skin Side Effects From Lung Cancer Treatment

Show Notes

Hope With Answers: Living With Lung Cancer | Fall 2026

Guests: Dr. Olivia Fankuchen and Jeanne Szurek

Brief Episode Summary

Many of today's most effective lung cancer treatments can cause skin side effects like rash, dryness, or irritation around the nails. What if you could prepare for those side effects before they ever start?

Patient host Jeanne Szurek, who has used a proactive skin care routine during her own treatment, talks with thoracic medical oncologist Dr. Olivia Fankuchen about proactive therapy management (PTM). Together they cover why prevention matters, what a simple PTM routine looks like, when to start it, and why speaking up about side effects can help you stay on the treatment that's working for you.

Guests

Dr. Olivia Fankuchen — Thoracic medical oncologist, lung cancer specialist, and cancer researcher at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York. Dr. Fankuchen is passionate about providing the most effective treatments for her patients while helping them stay as comfortable as possible throughout their treatment journey.

Jeanne Szurek — Patient host and patient advocate, living with lung cancer. Jeanne once thought she would simply deal with a rash if one developed. Her care team showed her that managing side effects early could help her stay on treatment, and it has worked for her.

Episode Highlights

What Is Proactive Therapy Management? Dr. Fankuchen describes PTM as her "toolkit" for giving patients additional care from the start of treatment to help prevent skin irritation and other side effects.

Why Skin Side Effects Matter: Rashes can affect comfort, confidence, and sleep. When they become severe, they can also lead to dose changes, treatment breaks, or a switch to a different therapy.

What a PTM Routine Involves: Gentle ceramide or antibacterial washes, protective creams, and in many cases a preventive antibiotic, plus the most important step: telling your care team when something feels different.

Timing Is Everything: Why Dr. Fankuchen likes patients to start the routine before cancer treatment begins (sometimes about a week ahead, depending on the treatment), so prevention is already working.

Making It Manageable: How caregivers, reminder diaries, and reframing PTM as self-care can ease the mental load of one more routine.

What to Watch For: Dryness, flaking, redness, itching, cracking around the nails, mouth irritation, and fever, and when to contact your care team.

You're Not a Bad Patient for Speaking Up: Why sharing side effects early helps your care team keep you on treatment, including if you are in a clinical trial.

The Caregiver Connection: Loved ones are often the "eyes and ears" outside the clinic and may notice changes before you do.



Links and Resources

- [Proactive Therapy Management: Protect Your Skin](#)
- [Download the free PTM Patient & Caregiver Guide](#) — the four-part routine, explained
- [How to Talk to Your Doctor](#)
- [The First 7 Days — Newly Diagnosed Roadmap](#)
- [Find a Clinical Trial](#)
- [Get a Second Opinion](#)

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