

HDR Brachytherapy for Gynecological (female) Cancers Standard Outpatient Procedure



Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program

www.nscancercare.ca

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Standard Outpatient Procedure

What is High Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy?

- Brachytherapy (pronounced brack-ee-ther-a-pee) is a form of radiation treatment. It uses a radioactive source that is put in or near the cancer. This allows a high dose of radiation to be given directly to the tumor site in your body
- You may need more than one treatment. Your radiation oncologist will decide how many treatments you will need.
- You may be given medicine to help you relax or put you to sleep for the treatment. This medicine is given into a vein using an IV (intravenous).

What will happen on the day of treatment?

- The procedure takes place in the Brachytherapy Unit at the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre.
- Register at the Radiation Therapy reception desk 30 minutes before your treatment.
- Bring your health card.
- Bring all of your medicines, in their original containers.
- Take your regular daily medicines at the usual times unless you are told otherwise.
- Do not have anything to eat or drink after midnight.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol for 24 hours before your treatment.
- Instructions for bowel prep will be given to you for the night before your procedure.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

- Ask a family member or friend to come with you and drive you home after your treatment. You will not be allowed to drive yourself home if you have been given medicine to relax you or put you to sleep.
- Whether you are staying at the Lodge or at home, you need to arrange for someone stay with you the night after your procedure.

What happens during the treatment?

- The procedure should take about 90 minutes.
- There will be several staff in the room.
- You will lie down on a special table. Your legs will be placed in stirrups for support.
- An IV will be started in your arm. The IV will be used to give you the medicine and fluids you need during the procedure.
- You will be connected to a heart, blood pressure and oxygen monitor.
- Your vaginal area will be cleaned with a cool brown soap. A catheter (soft tube) may be put in your bladder to drain urine.
- The radiation oncologist will put the treatment applicator into position in your vagina.
- The radiation therapist will take x-rays that will be used to plan your treatment.
- When the plan is ready, the radiation therapist will connect a plastic hose to the treatment applicator in your vagina. The radiation source will move from a special machine through the hose and into the applicator to deliver the treatment.
- During the treatment the team will leave the room. Your team will be able to see you and hear you when the treatment is being given. The team can stop the treatment any time if you need help.
- Your treatment will last 5-10 minutes. After the treatment is done, the radiation therapist will remove the hose. The Radiation Oncologist will remove the applicator.

What Happens After Treatment?

- You will be woken up and taken to a special recovery area, where the nurses will continue to check your blood pressure and heart rate.
- The nurse will check your level of pain and give you pain medicine as needed.
- You can go home when the nurses feel you are well enough to leave.

What Happens in the Recovery Area?

- You will spend 1-2 hours in the recovery room.
- You will stay connected to the monitors. The nurses will check your:
 - › Blood pressure and pulse
 - › Breathing
 - › IV
 - › Vaginal bleeding or discharge
- When you are fully awake, the IV and catheter will be removed.
- You may feel tired or drowsy for a few hours. Rest as much as you can.

Special Instructions

- When you are ready to go home, instructions about your care at home will be reviewed with you.
- Do not have sexual intercourse once you start your brachytherapy treatments. You may return to sexual intercourse two weeks after your brachytherapy treatments are finished as long as you do not have pain, large amounts of bleeding, or an infection.
- You will be given information on how to use a vaginal dilator after your treatments are complete.
- You will likely be booked for a brachytherapy treatment once or twice a week, unless your oncologist has talked about other plans. Each treatment follows the same steps.
- After your last treatment, we will give you a follow-up appointment.

What if I have Questions?

Please feel free to ask your health care team any questions you have about your treatments.

Doctor: _____

Nurse: _____

Phone Number 902-473-6067 - choose option 5 to leave a message for your Oncologist or Nurse.

If you have any problems from your treatment after hours, call 902-473-2220 and ask to speak to the Radiation Oncologist.

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider. The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

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