

# HDR Brachytherapy for Gynecological (female) Cancers Standard Inpatient Procedure

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## Standard Inpatient 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.
- Your radiation oncologist will decide how many treatments you will need. You will stay in hospital until all the treatments are finished. The brachytherapy treatments will be done after all your external beam treatments are complete.

### 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.**

## **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.
- You will be given medication to help you relax or put you to sleep for the insertion and first treatment. An IV will be started in your arm and will be used to give you the medicine and fluids you need during the procedure.
- You will be connected up to a heart, blood pressure and oxygen monitor.
- Your legs will be placed in stirrups for support.
- Your vaginal area will be cleaned with a cool brown soap. A catheter (soft tube) will be put in your bladder to drain urine. This will stay in place until the
- treatments are done.
- The radiation oncologist will put the treatment applicator into position in your vagina. This will stay in your vagina until all the treatments are done.
- A small stitch will be put in place to keep the applicator from moving.
- The radiation therapist will take x-rays that will be used to plan your treatment.
- You will be awakened and taken to the recovery area in the Cancer Center.
- When the plan is ready, the radiation therapist will bring you into the room in your hospital bed and 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.

## **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

- Once you are fully recovered, someone will take you to your hospital room in your bed.

### **While in hospital**

- You must remain in bed.
- Do not raise the head of the bed more than 30°
- You may lay on your back or on either side with a pillow placed between your legs. You cannot lay on your stomach.
- Do not bend your knees more than the amount to place a flat pillow under them.
- You will be on a low fiber diet.
- The nurse will check your level of pain and give you pain medicine as needed.
- You may have 2 treatments in one day; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Someone will bring you to the Cancer Center in your bed for your treatments.
- After the last treatment
  - › The doctor will remove the catheter from your bladder
  - › The doctor will remove the applicator(s) from your vagina.

### **Special Instructions**

- When you are ready to go home, instructions about your care at home will be reviewed with you.
- 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.

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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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