

HDR Brachytherapy for Gynecological Cancers (Vault Procedure)

What is HDR (High Dose Rate) Brachytherapy ?

Brachytherapy (pronounced brack-ee-ther-a-pee) is a form of radiation treatment. An applicator is inserted into the vagina. A radioactive source is then put into the applicator. This allows a high dose of radiation to be given to treatment area. This is called HDR brachytherapy.

You may need more than one treatment. Your Radiation Oncologist will decide how many treatments you will need and when they will be scheduled.

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 provincial (MSI) health card.
- Bring all of your medicines, in their original containers.
- Take your regular medicines at the usual times unless you are told otherwise.

What happens during the treatment?

- The procedure will take about 90 minutes on the first day and about 30 minutes on the other treatment days.
- There will be several staff in the room, including a Radiation Oncologist, Radiation Therapists, or Residents.
- You will lie down on a special table. The Radiation Oncologist will put the treatment applicator into position in your vagina. If you have any cramping or pain during the procedure, tell the Radiation Therapist.
- When your treatment plan is ready, the Radiation Therapist will connect a plastic tube to the treatment applicator. The radioactive source will move from a special machine through the tube and into the applicator to give the treatment.
- During the treatment, the team will leave the room. They will be able to see you and hear you when the treatment is being given.
- The team can stop the treatment at any time if needed.
- Your treatment will last around 5-15 minutes. After the treatment is done, the Radiation Therapist will disconnect the tube and remove the applicator.

What happens after the treatment?

- We will review the instructions for your care at home with you.
- If you need more than one treatment, we will give you the date and time of your next treatment. Each treatment follows the same steps.
- After your last treatment, a follow up appointment will be arranged for you.

Special instructions

- You should avoid sexual activity once you start your brachytherapy treatments. You may return to sexual activity 2 weeks after your brachytherapy treatments are finished. If you are having pain, large amounts of bleeding or signs of an infection, continue to avoid sexual activity and contact your radiation therapy team.
- You will get information on how to use a vaginal dilator when your treatments are complete.

What if I have questions?

Please feel free to ask your radiation therapy team any questions you have about your treatments.

Patient and family feedback is very important to us.

We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to education.cancercare@nshealth.ca or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only.

It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.