

High Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy for cancer of the cervix

What is HDR Brachytherapy?

- Brachytherapy is a type of radiation treatment in which a radiation source is placed inside the body.
- Brachytherapy allows a high dose of radiation to be given in or very close to the tumour.
- With brachytherapy, the healthy area around the tumour is exposed to only a very small amount of radiation.

Where do I go for Brachytherapy?

- Treatment takes place in the Brachytherapy Suite at the Juravinski Cancer Centre (JCC).
- You may need one or more brachytherapy treatments. Your radiation oncologist (doctor) will decide on the number of treatments you need.
- On the first day of treatment, go to the reception area on Level 0 of the JCC. You will be directed to the review waiting room for your appointment.

What do I have to do on the day before treatment?

- The day before your treatment, you will get a phone call from a JCC secretary who will tell you when to come in for your appointment.
- Do not eat or drink after midnight the night before your treatment.
- Do not smoke or drink any alcohol for 24 hours before treatment.
- Arrange to have someone come with you and take you home.
You will not be allowed to drive after the treatment.

What do I do on the day of treatment?

- Plan to be here for at least 2 to 3 hours. Your treatment should take about 1 hour.
- Take prescription medications if you need them as instructed by your Primary Team.
- Bring all of your prescription medications to the appointment in their original containers.
- Bring your health card.
- Leave all of your valuables at home.

What happens before treatment starts?

You will:

- meet your brachytherapy nurse and discuss your health history and have your blood pressure and temperature checked.
 - need to undress completely and put on a hospital gown.
 - have an intravenous (IV) line put in your arm for medications and fluids needed during your treatment.
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What happens in the Brachytherapy Suite?

When you first arrive:

- You will see and meet many staff members who work together on your treatment.
- You will lie down in a comfortable position.
- Your legs will be in the same position as a gynecological exam, such as a PAP test.
- Your heart beat and blood pressure will be monitored during the procedure.
- You will be given medication in your IV to keep you relaxed.

When you treatment starts

- The area around your vagina will be cleaned and a tube (foley catheter) to drain your bladder will be put in.
- You will have an applicator put into your vagina and secured by the doctor and therapist.
- You will have an ultrasound and x-ray done to make sure the applicator is in the right place.
- For your first treatment, you will be taken to the Computed Tomography (CT) area for a scan. You will be taken there on a stretcher and will return when the scan is complete.
- A tube will be attached to connect the applicator to the radiation machine.
- The staff will leave the room before the radiation machine is turned on.
- When the treatment is finished, the radiation source goes back into the machine and the tube and applicators will be removed.
- You will be washed and helped to wear a pad and underwear.

What if I need help during treatment?

- **The team can stop your treatment at any time if you need help.**
- The team will not be in the room but they will watch you with cameras and talk to you over an intercom, if needed.

What happens after treatment?

- You will **not** be radioactive.
- You will be taken to the recovery area where you will be stay until you are well enough to leave.
- You will be given your next appointment before you leave.
- Rest as much as possible when you get home, you may feel tired or drowsy for a few hours.

What if I have questions or concerns?

Call your Primary Team if you have question or concerns:

Doctor: _____

Nurse: _____

Chart Number: _____

Phone Number: 905-387-9495, extension _____

Call 905-387-9495 and ask to speak with your Primary Team if you have any of these problems:

- not able to urinate
- heavy bleeding from your vagina
- chills or fever (temperature higher than 38°C (100°F) or higher)
- very bad cramps or pain in your abdomen

If you have any of these problems when the JCC is closed, go to the Emergency Department.



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