

HDR brachytherapy

What is high dose rate (HDR) brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy is a type of internal radiation treatment. In HDR brachytherapy, a radioactive source is put in or near the tumour. This lets your radiation oncologist deliver a high dose of radiation over a short time, directly to the tumour site in your body. You may need more than one treatment. Your radiation oncologist will decide how many treatments you will need. You will have your treatments in the Brachytherapy Suite at the Juravinski Cancer Centre (JCC).

What happens before the treatment?

- **Do not** eat or drink before the treatment, unless you are told otherwise. Take all your prescribed medication at the usual times.
- On the day of your first treatment, go to the reception area on Level 0 of the JCC **45 minutes** before your treatment. Then you will be directed to go to the review waiting room.
- Please ask a family member or friend to come with you and **take you home after your treatment. You will not be allowed to drive after the treatment.**
- You will be taken to the Brachytherapy Suite for your treatment.

What happens during the treatment?

- There will be several staff in the Suite. Usually there are Registered Nurses, Radiation Therapists, a Radiation Oncologist and a Physicist. Sometimes we have other staff and students visiting.
- The Brachytherapy Suite is designed for your treatment. The Brachytherapy nurse will help you lie down on a special table. You will see an x-ray machine, TV screen and other monitoring equipment around you. Your heart beat and blood pressure will be checked during the treatment.
- The Radiation Oncologist will put the treatment applicator into position. X-rays will be taken to check the position of the applicator and plan your treatment.

- A tube from the treatment machine will be attached to the applicator. During treatment the radioactive source is moved from the machine to the applicator at the tumour site. This lasts a few minutes.
- During treatment the Brachytherapy team must leave the room. This protects us from being exposed to radiation over the years at work. With the TV and intercom, will be able to see you and talk to you at all times. **The team can interrupt your treatment any time if you need help.**
- When your treatment is finished, the radioactive source will go back into the machine. The team can come back into the room. We will remove the applicators and help you get up.

What happens after treatment?

If you had sedation, you will move onto a stretcher and be transferred to the Ambulance Care Unit, where the nurses will continue to check your vital signs. You can go home when the nurses feel you are well enough to leave.

If you need more than one treatment, we will tell you the date and time of your next treatment. Each treatment follows the same steps.

After your last treatment we will give you a date and time for a follow up appointment.

What if I have questions or concerns?

If you have questions or concerns during weekdays, call 905-387-9495 and speak with your Primary Care Team.

Doctor: _____

Nurse: _____

If you have any problems related to your treatment after hours, call 905-387-9495 and ask to speak with the doctor on-call at the JCC, or go to the Emergency Department at the Juravinski Hospital.

If you are outside of Hamilton, go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department.