



Chris O'Brien Lifehouse

Radiation Oncology Patient information

Brachytherapy for intrauterine and
vaginal vault cancers

Brachytherapy for intrauterine cancers

Intrauterine brachytherapy is used for cervix cancers. It involves the placement of small, hollow tubes inside the uterus. These tubes are called applicators. The radioactive source will travel into the applicator from a storage unit through thin cables. The source is left inside the applicators until the correct dose is given (usually about 10-20 minutes), and is then returned into the storage unit when treatment is completed.

Brachytherapy for vaginal vault cancers

Vaginal vault brachytherapy is used for post-operative endometrial cancers. It involves the placement of a small, hollow cylinder inside the vagina. This cylinder is called an applicator. The radioactive source will travel into the applicator from storage through a thin cable. The source is left inside the applicator until the correct dose is given (about 5-10 minutes), and is then returned into the storage unit when treatment is completed.

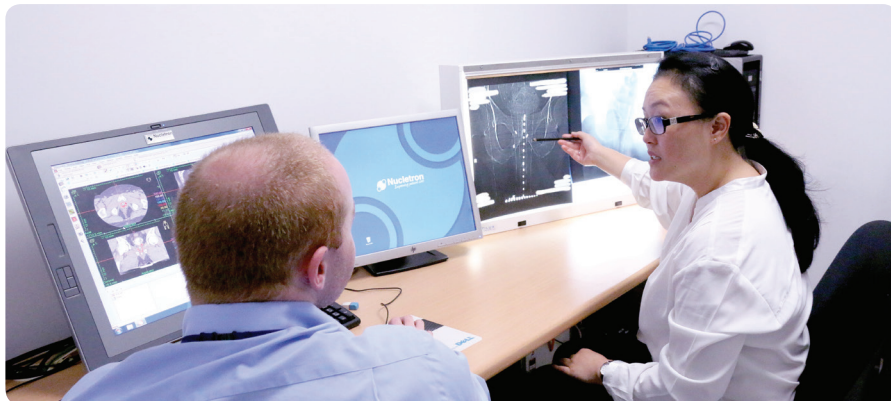
What happens during treatment for intrauterine cancers

All patients having intrauterine brachytherapy undergo a general anaesthetic, which means you will be asleep for the duration of treatment (about 40 minutes – 1 hour). You will need to fast from midnight the night before treatment.

You will typically receive about four treatments, once a week. Some patients will have this treatment in combination with external beam radiation therapy. Only one type of treatment, internal or external, is given per day.

For each treatment, your Radiation Oncologist will insert the treatment applicator. You will be alone in the room while the treatment machine is on, but your care team will be monitoring you from outside via a camera.

After your treatment, which may take about an hour, the applicator will be removed and you will go to the recovery room for a couple of hours until the anaesthesia wears off. You will need someone to pick you up after treatment.



What happens during treatment for vaginal vault cancers?

Patients will typically receive four treatments, twice a week. Each treatment session takes about 20-30 minutes. Some patients will have this treatment in combination with external beam radiation therapy. Only one type of treatment, internal or external, is given per day.

For each treatment, your Radiation Oncologist or Registrar will insert the treatment applicator. The applicator may be a little uncomfortable, however, if it is too uncomfortable, please let the Radiation Oncologist know as a smaller applicator can be used. The Radiation Therapist and Radiation Oncologist will be inside the room while setting you up, however, they will leave the room while the treatment is being delivered.

During this time, your Radiation Therapist will be monitoring you via a camera and microphone, so if you need to get their attention at any time, you can raise your hand or call out. You will not feel anything during treatment. It is important to keep still during treatment. After the treatment is complete, your Radiation Oncologist will remove the applicator and you can go home.

Treatment side effects

There are very few immediate side effects with intrauterine and vaginal vault brachytherapy, however, your Radiation Oncologist will discuss these with you.

To find out about complementary therapies that might assist you to manage your symptoms and side effects, contact the LivingRoom team on 02 8514 0038 or email: livingroom@lh.org.au.

Side effects	What can help?
Vaginal discharge and soreness while on treatment and you may have a predisposition to infection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to wear loose comfortable cotton underwear.
A small amount of bleeding after treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This should clear up quickly but if this bleeding continues the day after the treatment then contact your Radiation Oncologist.
Development of scar tissue in your vagina (for patients undergoing vaginal vault brachytherapy) this can cause narrowing and shortening of your vagina. This may make intercourse uncomfortable or difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help keep your vagina open, dilators (a plastic or rubber tube shaped device) should be used. After your last treatment or on your six week follow up appointment, your doctor or nurse will show you how to use one. Water-based vaginal lubricant can help relieve painful irritation. AVOID Vaseline and oil-based lubricants.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or nurses.

Weekly examinations

During your course of radiation therapy, you will be examined once a week by your Radiation Oncologist or Radiation Oncology Registrar. This will require a longer visit on that day and is essential for your treatment. Record your treatment review details below. A doctor is always available should you need to see someone outside these times.

Radiation Oncologist: _____

Radiation Oncology Registrar: _____

Clinic review time: _____

Treatment machine/phone number: _____

For more information about Radiation Oncology, please refer to our general booklet '*Explaining Radiation Therapy*'.

Notes



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