The ROYAL MARSDEN
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information

Having gynaecological brachytherapy after a hysterectomy

What is brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy is a type of internal radiation treatment (radiotherapy) which is delivered by placing a plastic tube (applicator) close to the area to be treated. A machine called an HDR microSelectron is connected to the tube to deliver the radiation to the area around the applicator. Brachytherapy can be given in addition to external beam radiotherapy or on its own.

The type of brachytherapy procedure you will have can depend on several factors and will be explained to you in detail by your clinical team. You will not be able to feel the treatment, and you will not be radioactive afterwards.

Treatment

The brachytherapy procedure is carried out in the brachytherapy suite in the Radiotherapy Department. The sessions are on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons; you will be given a schedule for the days you will need to attend. The insertion of the applicator may be a little uncomfortable, but the procedure is simple and painless, and no anaesthetic is required. Sometimes we may require a CT scan, with or without an MRI, with the applicator in place so that the exact area for treatment can be identified. Your doctor will tell you if this is required.

Procedure

- A radiographer will collect you from the radiotherapy waiting area and take you into the treatment room
- They will check your identity and explain the procedure in full. You will have an opportunity to ask any questions before starting
- They will ask you to undress from the waist down and will give you a gown to wear
- You will lie down on a specially designed couch with your legs supported in rests and raised to a comfortable position
- The doctor or radiographer will carry out a simple internal examination to determine the right size of applicator to use. The treatment tube, a smooth cylinder, will be lubricated and inserted into position in your vagina.
- The treatment applicator is held in place by a bar at the end of the treatment couch
- We calculate the treatment time once we know what applicator has been used

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Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy Services F538021 & F538022

- During your treatment you will be alone in the room, although there is a CCTV and intercom link to the control area (please be assured that this is a live feed to ensure your safety; no recordings are made)
- The brachytherapy treatment machine is connected to the applicator to deliver the treatment - you will not feel anything at all whilst the treatment is being delivered.
- The treatment time can vary from 3–9 minutes for each treatment
- When your treatment finishes, we will gently remove the applicator.

You will not usually have any side effects from this procedure, although sometimes there can be a small amount of bleeding (usually this is little more than spotting). You can continue all your normal activities, and you do not need to adjust to your usual diet.

Feminine care

You will be advised about feminine care when you return for follow up 4–6 weeks after treatment. Please see The Royal Marsden factsheet *Feminine care for women having pelvic radiotherapy* for further information.

At the end of your treatment, please ensure that you have a follow-up appointment to attend.

Contact details

If you feel unsure about anything, please discuss it further with the team treating you or your key worker/Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), and do not hesitate to call the hospital once your treatment is completed if you need advice.

PA to Clinical Oncologist	020 7808 2581	(Chelsea)
PA to Clinical Oncologist	020 8661 3272	(Sutton)

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Hotline: (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)	020 8915 6899

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