

High Dose Rate (HDR) Transperineal Interstitial and Intracavitary Brachytherapy

For patients with gynecological cancers

This booklet will give you information about:

- High dose rate (HDR) interstitial and intracavitary brachytherapy treatment
- How to get ready for your treatment
- What to expect during your treatment
- How to take care of yourself after treatment
- When to call your health care team



Please go over this information with your family and caregivers.

Keep track of your treatment and appointment dates:



MRI before your brachytherapy treatment:

Interstitial/intracavitary brachytherapy treatment dates:

If you have any questions or concerns about your care during your brachytherapy treatment:

Important phone numbers

On weekdays (Monday to Friday) 9:00 AM–4:30 PM

- Please call the Odette Cancer Centre and ask to speak to a gynecology nurse.

Phone number: 416-480-5000

After hours on weekdays 4:30 PM–8:30 AM and on weekends and statutory holidays (24 hours a day)

- Please call the After-Hours Phone Line and let them know you are having brachytherapy treatment.

Phone number: 1-877-681-3057



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High dose rate (HDR) interstitial and intracavitary brachytherapy treatment

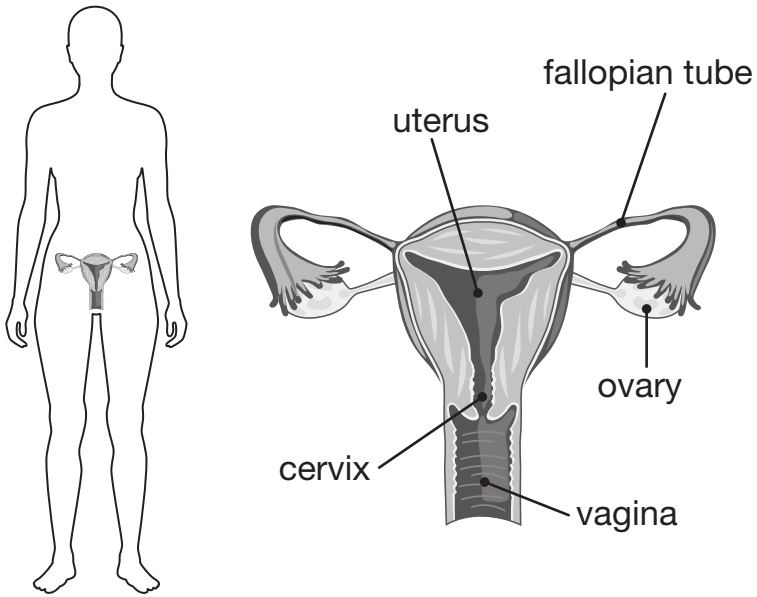


What is high dose rate (HDR) interstitial/ intracavitary brachytherapy?

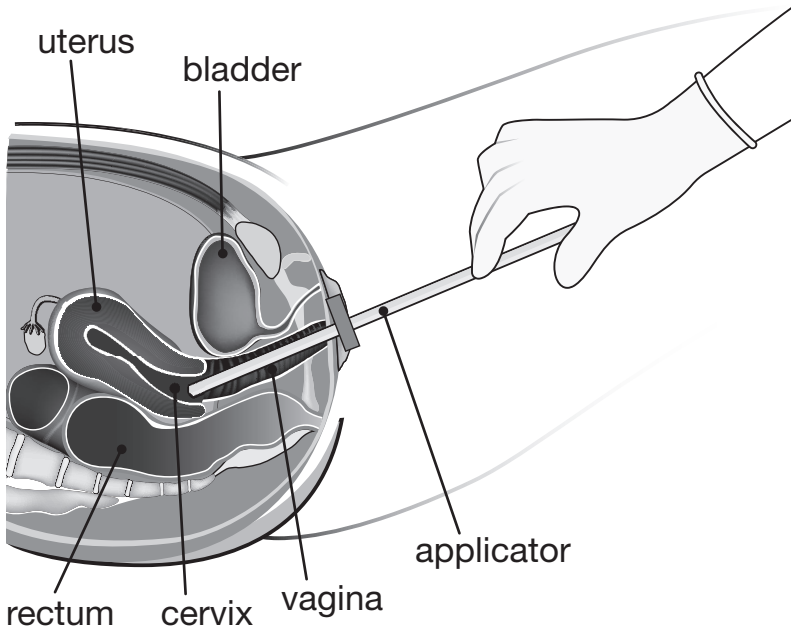
- HDR interstitial/intracavitary brachytherapy is an internal radiation treatment to treat gynecological cancer or cancer that has come back to the gynecological area (cervix, ovaries, uterine, vagina/vulva).
- Radioactive sources are placed in or near the tumour for a short period of time. HDR brachytherapy allows a large amount of radiation to target where the cancer is. This means that other healthy parts of your body do not get radiation.

How is interstitial and intracavitary brachytherapy treatment done?

- You will be asked to lie down on your back on the treatment bed. You will be given an anesthetic (medicine that makes you sleepy). An applicator will be placed through the vagina and possibly into the uterus.
- Radioactive material will be placed into the applicator during the treatment.
- Your health care team will let you know how many brachytherapy treatments you will have.



The female reproductive system.



This is a side view of how interstitial/brachytherapy treatment is done. An applicator is put into the vagina and/or uterus. Your radiation treatment is given through the applicator.

Where is interstitial and intracavitary brachytherapy treatment done?

- You will get your treatment in the Brachytherapy Suite at the Odette Cancer Centre.
- Treatment is given to you by a team of medical physicists, nurses, radiation oncologists (cancer doctor), and radiation therapists.
- You may need to come to the hospital more than once to complete your treatment, or you may need to stay overnight in the hospital before and after your treatment.
- You will not be radioactive outside of the Brachytherapy Suite.

How to get ready for your treatment



1 to 2 weeks before your treatment:

- You will have an MRI scan with the applicator in place to help us plan your treatment.
- A nurse will phone you to go over the steps of your treatment.

The day before your treatment:

- You can eat solid foods until midnight the night before the treatment. If this is not the case for you, your health care team will let you know.** Your health care team will tell you if you need to have your bowels cleaned before your treatment.

- You can have clear fluids up to 2 hours before your treatment.**

A **clear fluid** is a clear liquid that you can see through at room temperature. Some clear fluids that you can have include:

- Water
- Fruit juices such as apple, cranberry and grape (**without pulp**)
- Sports drinks (Powerade, Gatorade)
- Carbonated soft drinks such as ginger ale, cola, lemon/lime
- Tea and coffee (**do not add milk or cream**)
- Jell-O (**without fruit toppings or whip cream**)
- Popsicles (**without cream**)
- Broth and consommé (clear soup)

What to bring with you on the day of your treatment:

- This booklet.
- Identification showing your name, address and date of birth (Ontario Health Card and red Sunnybrook hospital card).
- A list of the medications that you are taking. Your health care team will let you know what medications you may need to stop taking.

Important:

Please make sure you have someone to pick you up from the hospital after your treatments are done. You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after your treatment.

Please have someone stay with you overnight when you are home for your safety.

What to expect during your treatment



Where to check-in:

- Please check-in at the Radiation Therapy Reception desk on the ground floor of the Odette Cancer Centre.

Before your treatment:

- We will ask you about your medical history and any medications you take.

Preparing for your treatment:

- **Your brachytherapy treatment is done with you asleep under anesthetic (medicine that makes you sleepy).** This will usually take between 2.5-4 hours. You will not feel any pain while you are getting treatment.
- A catheter will be put into your bladder to drain your urine (pee). This will stay in place until you are ready to go home.
- The applicator will be put into the treatment area.
- You will then have an MRI and/or CT scan to help your radiation team plan your treatment.

During your treatment:

- After your treatment is planned, tubes will be attached to the applicator and the treatment will begin. **You will be asleep for this.**
- The applicator will be taken out once the treatment is finished.
- After the applicator is taken out, we will wake you up from the anesthetic and take you to the recovery room until you are ready to go home.

After your treatment:

- After your treatment, you may feel some pain and discomfort. The health care team will check your pain. We will ask you to rate your pain on a scale of 0-10. (For example: 0 = no pain, 10 = the worst pain ever.) This will help us to understand how much pain you have and change your medications to help with your pain if needed.

Getting ready to leave the hospital:

- Before you leave the hospital, the catheter (tube draining your bladder) will be taken out and the staff will make sure you can empty your bladder.
- Your health care team will tell you about what you need to do at home before you leave the hospital.
- **Please ask a family member or friend to take you home from the hospital.**

How to take care of yourself after treatment



After your treatment is done, you may:

- Have some slight spotting or bleeding from your vagina. This is normal.

Important:

You must contact your health care team right away or go to your closest emergency room if:

- **You have bleeding from the vagina that is heavier than a light menstrual period or is bright red**
- **You need to change a saturated pad every 1-2 hours**

- Have some vaginal cramping. This should stop within 24 hours.
- Have some burning when you urinate (pee) for 1 to 2 days because a catheter was put into your bladder when you were at the hospital. Try to drink lots of liquids to help with the discomfort.

- Feel tired, especially if you also had external beam radiation therapy treatments. You may feel tired for a couple of weeks after your last treatment. This will get better as time passes.
- **Put an icepack on the area(s) where you have bruising or swelling for 10 minutes at a time, 4-5 times a day, over the next 2 days** to help with the swelling. **Do not put the icepack directly on your skin.** Wrap the icepack in a towel/cloth or put it on the outside of your underwear.

The radiation from your treatment can cause the tissue in the vagina to tighten and narrow. A brachytherapy nurse will go over the “How to use a vaginal dilator” booklet with you.

When to call your health care team



Please call your health care team if you have:

- A lot of pain that does not go away with pain medicine.
- Signs of an infection, such as vaginal itching, fever, vaginal discharge with a strong odour or abdominal pain.
- Any questions or concerns about your care during your brachytherapy treatment.

Important:

You must contact your health care team right away or go to your closest emergency room if:

- **You have bleeding from the vagina that is heavier than a light menstrual period or is bright red**
- **You need to change a saturated pad every 1-2 hours**

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Phone number: 1-877-681-3057



Your follow-up appointment:



Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Phone number: _____

People I might have to call:

Odette Cancer Centre
2075 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M5
[sunnybrook.ca/odette](https://www.sunnybrook.ca/odette)

