

Gynaecological Brachytherapy (Internal Radiotherapy) - Endometrium

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Gynaecological Brachytherapy (Internal Radiotherapy)

Using Flexitron HDR

The aim of this patient information is to explain what brachytherapy is and the treatment procedure.

This type of radiotherapy treatment is used for treating gynaecological cancers. It is routinely carried out as an outpatient procedure.

What is Flexitron HDR?

This is the name of the machine that delivers the internal radiotherapy. It uses a small radioactive pellet that passes into thin, hollow tubes called applicators. The radioactive pellet does not touch you. You will not be radioactive following the treatment.

What will happen?

The preparation and treatment are carried out in the same room, within the brachytherapy suite. Family and/or friends will not be able to enter this area.

You have had a hysterectomy (womb removal) and do not need an anaesthetic for the procedure. For the first treatment the doctor or radiographer will carry out an internal examination using a speculum, but this is not required for the subsequent session.

The applicator will be inserted once the treatment time has been calculated. This is calculated before the treatment and takes approximately 10 minutes. The applicator is held in place by a support bracket on the bed. There may be very slight discomfort for a short time.

What happens during treatment?

You are not required to have a full bladder for this treatment.

You will remain in the same position until the end of the treatment session. This will be lying on your back with legs flat.

You will have pillows under your head and support sponges under your ankles (and knees if required).

A radiographer will be with you until the treatment is switched on.

There can be no members of staff in the treatment room during treatment, but you will be watched continually on a closed-circuit TV.

How long is the treatment?

The treatment time is usually less than 10 minutes for each session. You will be told the treatment time before it commences.

How many treatments will I have?

The treatment is usually given twice. This may be once a week or twice a week. The doctor will explain to you how many treatments you need. The brachytherapy radiographers will give you a schedule of appointments and times.

What happens when the treatment is finished?

A radiographer will remove the applicators, and you can then get dressed and leave the department when you feel ready. If you are an in-patient a porter will return you to the ward.

Short term problems you may have following treatment

You may experience looser bowels for a few days after each treatment. You may also feel the desire to pass urine more often.

Vaginal Dilation after Radiotherapy Treatment

This information is provided in addition to any information given to you by your consultant.

Radiotherapy to the vaginal area can cause the vagina to become shorter, narrower and less elastic than before treatment, as well as being drier due to loss of vaginal secretions.

Vaginal dilation will reduce the amount of scar tissue formation by gently stretching the tissues, helping to keep the vagina more supple and future medical examinations more comfortable. Dilation can be achieved by using a dilator, sexual intercourse or a combination of the two.

A radiographer will discuss the use of dilators after you have been given your last brachytherapy treatment and will provide you with a dilator pack. A vaginal dilator is a smooth plastic tube, and your dilator pack will contain 4 different sizes.

Useful websites:

www.jostrust.org.uk
www.cancerresearch.org.uk
www.macmillan.org.uk
www.daisynetwork.org.uk
www.infertilitynetwork.uk
www.maggiescentres.org
www.mariecurie.org.uk
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.eastmidlandscancernetwork.nhs.uk

Telephone Numbers

If you have any queries regarding your brachytherapy treatment, contact the relevant gynae-oncology specialist nurse or brachytherapy specialist.

Gynaecology nurses:	Lincoln 01522 573126
	Boston 01205 445431
Advanced Practitioners Brachytherapy:	Lincoln 01522 572243
Consultant via secretary:	Lincoln 01522 572218
	Boston 01205 445262/446432

Radiotherapy Department
Lincoln County Hospital

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