



## **Brachytherapy and GYN Cancer**

### Goal of the Procedure

Your doctor has recommended that you have a procedure which is called brachytherapy. Brachytherapy, or internal radiation therapy, is a way of giving a higher dose of radiation to the tumor area while sparing or reducing radiation exposure to other areas such as bowel or bladder.

### Before the Procedure

Your GYN oncologist will insert a small device called a Smits sleeve into your cervix. The Smits sleeve is a plastic device which maintains an open access to the uterus. The device will be sutured into your cervix while you are under sedation in an operating room or the physician's office. You will not have a radiation treatment on the day the Smits sleeve is placed.

A day before the treatment your radiation oncologist will prescribe medications to fill at your pharmacy. These medicines will help with pain, nausea or any anxiety which you may experience during the procedure. It is important that you bring your prescriptions with you to the radiation facility for all brachytherapy treatments.

### The Day of the Procedure

When you arrive to the radiation oncology office the nurse will insert a Foley (urinary) catheter. Your physician will examine you by placing a speculum into the vagina. At this time a long, thin tube called a tandem is passed through the Smits sleeve and into the uterus. Inflatable balloons or gauze packing in the vagina will hold the devices in place.

After the devices are inserted and secure you will receive a CT scan; you will not have an IV nor be injected with any dye for the scan.

After the CT scan you must stay in the same position on the stretcher while your treatment plan is being created. This is a complex process and will take approximately two hours. When the treatment plan is complete the GYN devices will be connected to the machine that delivers the radiation. The medical team cannot be

in the room while you are receiving treatment, but will be able to see and hear you during your procedure. You will not feel anything during the radiation treatment. Once your treatment is done, you will be disconnected from the machine.

After the radiation procedure is complete the GYN devices and urinary catheter will be removed.

You are not radioactive after treatment. It is safe for you to be around children, pregnant women and pets.

## **Information before Brachytherapy Procedure**

### The morning of the procedures

Do not eat after midnight. Do not take aspirin nor drink alcohol 24 hours before the procedure. Take your regular medications and the new medications you have been prescribed (written above) with a small amount of water. If you have having loose stools, take Imodium AD.

You must have a driver bring you for the treatments. The medications that you take for pain and anxiety can cause drowsiness. It is not legal and it is unsafe to drive while under the effects of these drugs.

You will be in the facility approximately 4 hours for your planning and treatment. We have a CD player for your use and you are welcome to bring your own music.

### After the procedures

You may have some vaginal discharge after each procedure. We will provide you with feminine pads or you may bring your own.

The radiation may cause diarrhea, vaginal irritation, fatigue, and bladder irritation. This may last for a few weeks after your last treatment.

After your final treatment the Smit sleeve will be removed in our clinic. Three days after the completion of all treatments you should start douching every day with a mixture of peroxide and water and continue to do so for one week.

### Days after the removal of the Smit's Sleeve

Three days after last treatment douche once a day using a mixture of:

Two tablespoons of hydrogen peroxide and 1 cup of water.

You can buy douche bags or douching bottles. Empty the contents of the bottles; wash them out and then use the hydrogen peroxide recipe listed above.

You can add more water to the solution if you feel irritation or burning.

Clean the applicator with peroxide after each use.

#### Emergency care:

Call our office at 901-624-2600 if you have:

Heavy bleeding (soaking a pad in one hour)

Diarrhea (more than four watery stools in a 24 hour period) which is not controlled by Imodium

Pain when emptying your bladder of urine

Running a fever higher than 101F

Our office is available 24 hours a day. Call 901-624-2600 for any emergencies which you feel may be related to your treatment

#### Do not:

No tampons, douching, intercourse, swimming or tub baths until 3 days after the Smits Sleeve is removed or your doctor has given you approval.

#### Follow up if:

A follow up appointment will be scheduled for about one month after treatment has ended. At this visit your physician will speak to you about vaginal rehabilitation and sexual health.