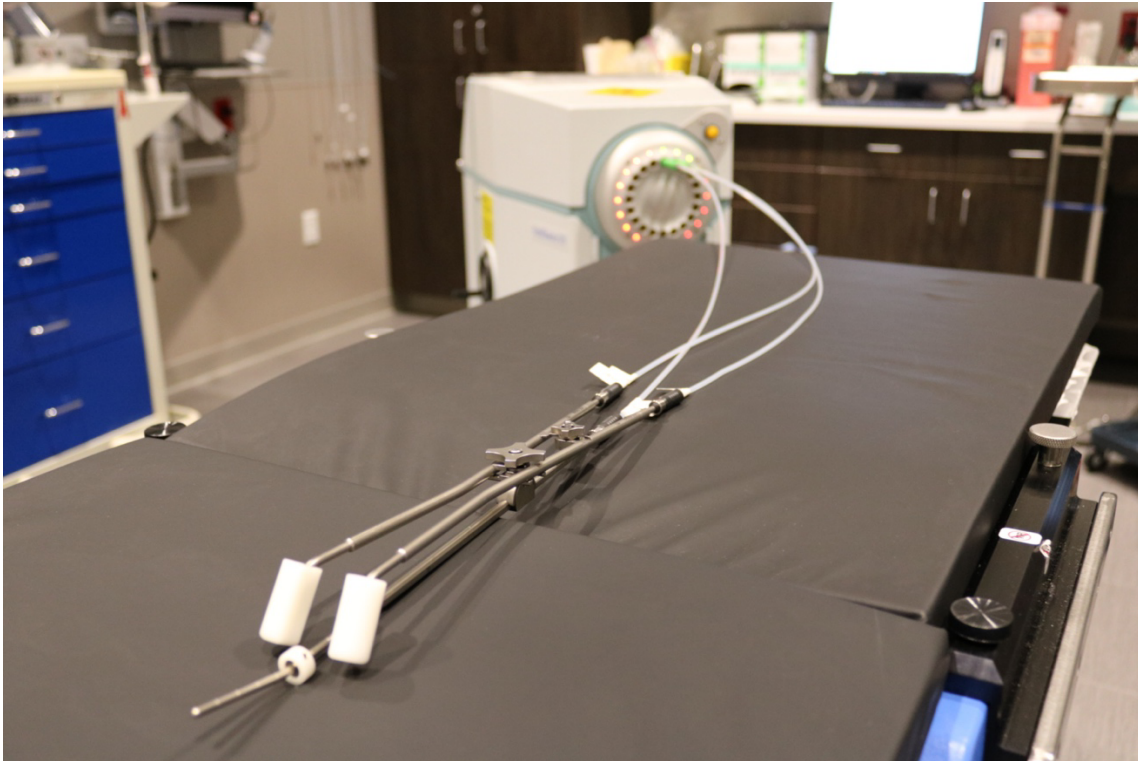


High-Dose-Rate Brachytherapy with Tandem & Ovoid

This information will help prepare you and your caregiver for your treatment. One way to give radiation is to place a radioactive source inside the body. You will receive high-dose brachytherapy through an applicator called a tandem and ovoid.



What to Expect

Night Before the Implant Procedure

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight. Your stomach must be empty to prevent getting sick to your stomach during the procedure. In addition, take 30mL of Milk of Magnesia twice a day, the day before the procedure unless you have ongoing diarrhea

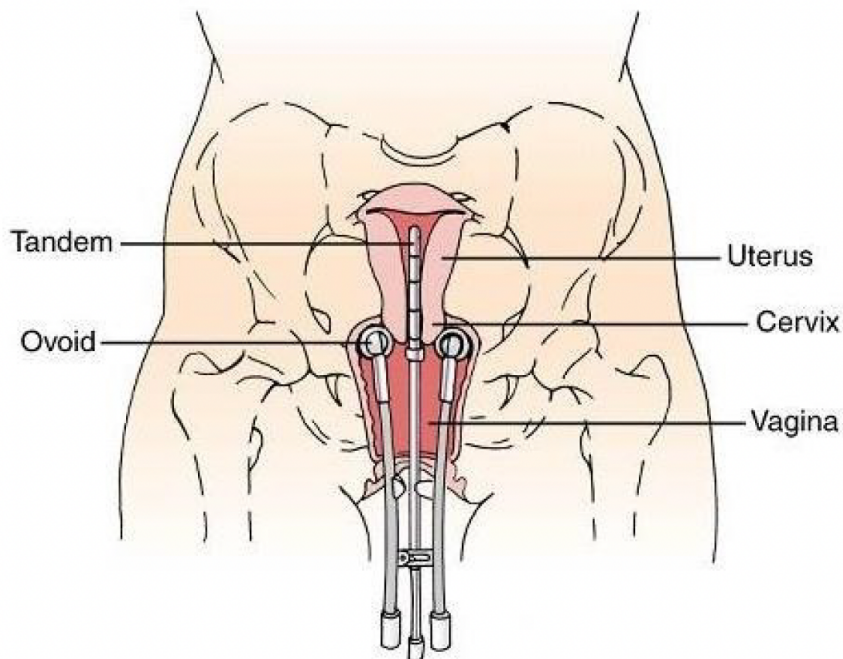
of greater than three stools per day, to produce a good bowel movement. The nurse will tell you when it is OK to eat and drink after the implant.

Before the Implant Procedure

Because you will receive medicine to help you relax and reduce pain, you are not safe to drive after the procedure. You must arrange for someone to pick you up and take you home. When you arrive, one of our nurses will get their contact information. If you don't have someone to drive you home, the procedure can't be performed and will be rescheduled.

- You will be taken to the dressing room to change for your procedure.
- You will then go to the patient holding area to have a Foley catheter and an intravenous (IV) catheter placed. The Foley catheter will be put into your bladder to drain urine. The IV will be inserted into your vein to administer relaxation and pain medications. Both will stay in place until the end of the procedure.
- The device insertion and radiation treatment will be performed in the brachytherapy room.

This procedure typically takes approximately 5 hours.



During the Procedure

Positioning of the Device and Treatment Planning

- You will be taken to the brachytherapy room.
- A nurse will give you medications for relaxation and pain.
- The doctor will insert the brachytherapy device into your vagina and/or cervix, which will be used to give the radiation. Gauze packing is placed into your vagina to keep the device in place.
- After the device is inserted, you will get a CT scan to ensure the device is positioned properly. Occasionally, the device will need to be repositioned. Once proper positioning is confirmed, you will be transported back to the patient holding area to rest while the radiation plan is completed.
- During this time, computer calculations will be done to determine how long the radioactive material should be in place.

Treatment

When your calculations are complete, you will be taken to the brachytherapy room for radiation treatment. Once inside, the radiation therapist or radiation physicist will connect the device to the brachytherapy machine. After connecting the device, all of the staff will leave and the door will be closed. Although you will be inside this room alone, there are two cameras, a microphone, and speakers for you to speak with the radiation staff, who will be watching during the entire treatment time. There is also a radiation indicator (a light that tells you when the radiation is on). While the radioactive source is in use, you will hear a beeping noise coming from the machine. The treatment time varies, usually 5 – 20 minutes, depending on the activity (strength) of the radiation source.

While the device is in place, it is very important you stay on the stretcher so that the device remains in place. Your head may be slightly raised and pillows may be placed under your knees for comfort. You should have little or no discomfort while the implant is in place. Some patients report cramping or pressure from the packing and implant

device. If you are uncomfortable, tell your nurse. Occasionally, some patients may need additional medication.

Implant Removal

- Once the treatment is done, the physicist will enter the room with a survey meter. This is done to make sure the radiation source has been properly returned to the brachytherapy machine. Once confirmed, the rest of the staff will enter the room.
- The device will be unhooked from the brachytherapy machine.
- The gauze packing, device, Foley catheter, and IV will be removed.
- You are not radioactive and the radiation is totally gone.
- Once you have recovered from the medications and are able to urinate on your own, you will be able to leave. Because you have been given strong medicines to help you relax and reduce pain, someone will have to take you home. You are not safe to drive. Your nurse will call your contact person and let them know what time to pick you up.

Treatment

A return appointment will be scheduled before you leave the clinic. This appointment enables the doctor to check your progress following the radiation treatments. It is important that you keep this appointment.

If you develop any problems that you feel need immediate attention, contact your primary physician. If you have any questions after reading this information or at any time while under treatment, contact your radiation oncologist or nurse. If you have any questions or problems concerning vaginal dilation or sexual intercourse, please contact the nurse at 214-645-8570.

Side Effects

- A pinkish discharge or light bleeding from the vagina is expected.

- For the first few days, you may experience pressure or burning when urinating or having a bowel movement.
- Possible dryness during and after treatment is expected. Using a water-based lubricant vaginal moisturizer a few times per week is helpful.
- You may have bowel upsets, such as diarrhea, for a few weeks or as long as 3 months after your implant procedure. If this happens, it's helpful to stop consuming drinks/foods that irritate the bowel such as alcohol, seasonings/spices, coffee, and tea. Also, avoid foods high in fiber (fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain breads, and cereals). Speak with our dietitian if you have any questions.
- Once home, you may feel tired. Your activities should depend on how well you feel. The most important thing is to not overdo it or let yourself get too tired. Frequent rest periods of 15 – 30 minutes during the day will help you relax and regain your strength.

Care

After radiation, you may develop some scar tissue in the vagina. This scar tissue could cause your vagina to shorten and close. Your vagina must remain open so your doctor can examine you properly. At completion of course of treatment you will need to use a vaginal dilator at regular intervals. This should be done for **at least 1 year following your treatment**. Your nurse will provide the dilator and instructions for use.

Sexual Intercourse

Ask your doctor when you can start having intercourse again. Usually, it's 4 – 6 weeks after your implant procedure. It's important for you and your partner to know that your vagina may have less natural lubrication (moistness). Many of the glands in your vagina that produce the wet, slippery feeling during sexual excitement can be destroyed by radiation, so artificial lubrication may be necessary. We suggest K-Y® Jelly, or any other water based lubricant suggested by your pharmacist, or an estrogenic cream as prescribed by your doctor. These lubricants can be purchased at any drugstore without a prescription.

DO NOT use Vaseline, hand lotion, baby oil, etc. as they are oil-based and can't be washed away with water. Some lotions are perfumed, which may cause irritation.

DO NOT be concerned about giving your partner cancer or exposing them to radiation. Remember, the source of radioactivity is gone once the implant is removed. You are **NOT** a danger to your partner, family, or friends.

Bathing and Other Care

Bathe and shower daily using warm water and a mild unscented soap such as Dove[®] or Purpose[®].

- **DO NOT** use a washcloth, scrubbing cloth, or brush when bathing.
- Pat skin dry with a soft towel or allow to air-dry.

To minimize skin irritation, wear loose-fitting cotton underwear and clothing. A daily vitamin is OK during your treatment. **DO NOT** take other vitamins or any supplements, including both nutritional and herbal supplements, without talking to your doctor.

Call Immediately if You Have Any of the Following Symptoms:

- Changes in the color of your mucus when coughing
- Temperature of 100.5° F or higher
- Shaking chills
- Flu-like symptoms
- Bleeding

Contact Us

During office hours, call your radiation oncologist. After-hours, call 214-645-8525.