GYN Brachytherapy: Interstitial Implant

Date of Procedure ______________________

This handout tells you about interstitial radiation. It tells you what will happen during the implant procedure. If you have any questions after reading this, please speak to your doctor or nurse.

What is interstitial radiation?

Interstitial radiation is a method of giving radiation to a fairly small area. This involves the placement of needles directly into the tumor site so that less normal tissue is radiated. Your doctor can give a higher dose of radiation in a shorter time than is possible with external beam radiation.

Since this type of treatment is quite involved, you may have an epidural catheter placed into your back during the entire procedure to give pain medicine directly to your pelvis. This will be discussed in more detail by the Anesthesia Screening clinic staff. Patients that require an epidural or spinal anesthesia will need a pre-surgical screening visit. Screening includes a physical exam by your radiation oncology doctor, blood work, and possibly a chest x-ray and/or EKG. If your radiation oncology doctor requests laproscopic assistance in placing the needles, you may also need to see a gynecologic oncology doctor prior to your implant.

The radiation procedure involves placing instruments into the vagina. This is usually a small cylinder-like tube. Most commonly, a small template is slid over the cylinder. It rests against the perineum (the skin around the vagina). Small hollow needles are inserted through the holes in the template and into the tumor site. (See diagram on page 3). In other situations, the needles are placed using a different type of instrument in the vagina. They may also be placed directly into the vagina without the template and then are sewn directly to the skin of the perineum. These instruments will be placed in the operating room (OR).

After the instruments are placed you may be taken to Radiology for an MRI. You will then go to the recovery room. Once anesthesia discharges you from recovery, you will be moved to your room or to the Radiation oncology clinic for a CT scan to plan the radiation treatments. Once your radiation doctor has all the information needed to start your treatment plan, you will rest in your hospital room. Once the plan is finalized, you will be brought to the Radiation Oncology Clinic by escort on your bed to begin your treatment.

The radiation sources are then inserted into the small hollow needles and remain there until the desired radiation dose is delivered which can take 10-25 minutes. The treatment time varies from patient to patient. Usually the treatments are given twice a day (morning and afternoon). Your doctor or nurse will explain your treatment plan to you. Once all of the radiation treatments are complete, the needles and other instruments will be removed.
Please follow these detailed bowel instructions.

1. Start on a clear liquid diet **48 hours or 2 days before** the implant. A clear liquid diet includes foods which are liquid at room temperature. Examples of clear liquids include: clear broth, consommé, tea, coffee, decaf coffee, Jello®, carbonated beverages, hard candy, clear fruit juices (cranberry, grape, apple, cherry) and fruit ades or ices made from allowed juices.

   **Start on _______________________________**

2. **24 hours or 1 day** before the implant please drink 2 bottles of magnesium citrate (8-10 ounces). You can buy these at any drugstore. They do not require a prescription.

   **Start on _______________________________**

3. Give yourself 1 Fleet’s® (phosphate) enema the evening before the implant. You can buy this at any drugstore. It does not require a prescription.

   **Start on _______________________________**

4. **Do not eat or drink anything after midnight** ________________________________

5. If you are told to give yourself 1 Fleet’s® (phosphate) enema the morning of the implant you should do so as soon as you get up or upon arrival at the hospital. You can buy this at any drug store. It does not require a prescription.

If you have any questions or problems doing the bowel prep, please call the Radiation oncology Department at **(608) 263-8500**.

**Day before Implant**

A nurse from the First Day Surgery (FDS) Center will call you the day or evening before the implant to give you further instructions. You will be given a time to arrive, most often around 5:30 a.m. You will be given directions to the FDS Center. The hospital can help you arrange for a local hotel if you wish to stay near the hospital the night before the procedure. First Day Surgery phone number is: **(608) 265-8857**.

**Day of Implant**

Please check in at the FDS Center located at E5/3 at your scheduled time. Leave your valuables such as jewelry and money at home or with a family member. We ask that your family bring any other materials or personal care items to your room after the procedure.

You will be asked to change into a gown. An IV (intravenous line) may be started. The staff will review your medicines, allergies, and medical history. During this time you will also meet the anesthesiologist.
The anesthesiologist may place an epidural catheter in your back. This gives you pain medicine to make you comfortable. This will be removed when the radiation treatment is over. They may also use a general anesthesia, which would mean that you would need to have a breathing tube placed. The tube will be removed before you leave the OR.

Your radiation oncology doctors will be present in the OR to place the instruments. You may be awake depending upon the type of anesthesia chosen. You will not feel any pain. A Foley catheter will also be placed. It will remain in until the radiation treatment is complete. The radiation oncology doctors may request assistance from a gynecology oncology doctor by using laparoscopy to help guide the needles.

Below is a picture of the implant.

![Implant Diagram]

After the implant is placed you will be taken from the OR to the recovery room. You may then be transported to your room, the Radiation oncology clinic for a CT scan or radiology clinic for an MRI.

Your room will be located on the F6/6 floor. Your room has a phone, TV, radio and view of the University campus. You may have visitors from 8am-9pm, depending upon your wishes.

Your entire hospital stay may be 4-7 days based on your treatment plan. Due to the position of the implant as well as the effects of the epidural, your movement will be limited. You will not be able to change your position without help. Your nurse will help you. You will have a catheter in your bladder because you will not be able to get up to go to the bathroom. Compression stockings will be placed on both legs to help blood flow and help prevent blood clots from forming. A soft diet will be provided for you.

When the radiation treatment is completed, the implant will be removed in the Radiation Oncology Clinic. Then the epidural catheter will be removed in your room. After you are able to get up and walk without help, you will be discharged home.

**Home Care Instructions**

1. Some vaginal spotting or bleeding is expected. This should stop within 1-2 days. You may bring a sanitary pad from home or we will give you one to wear. We suggest that you do not use tampons.
2. Avoid douching during the course of treatment. Douching can disrupt the body’s natural chemical balance.

3. A Foley catheter will be placed in your bladder during the procedure. You may have some irritation or burning when you first urinate after it has been removed. You should drink 8-12 glasses of fluids each day for the next 1-2 days.

4. You might have some discomfort or soreness around the vagina. We will give you a prescription for pain medicine if you need it.

5. Our experience shows women who use a sitz bath often (4-6 times per day) feel more comfortable and heal faster. You can use your bathtub or we can give you a sitz bath. To use the portable sitz bath, place it on the toilet and fill it with lukewarm water. You may add some cornstarch if you wish, just enough so the water turns white. Use this as often as you need – but remember more often is better.

6. You may be given a prescription for an antibiotic to take when you go home. Follow the directions on the bottle. Be sure to take the entire prescription.

7. You will be given a vaginal dilator to use at your first follow-up visit. The radiation may cause the vagina to become narrow and tight, so the dilator is used daily to help maintain the vaginal opening. There will be an explanation and instructions given to you later.

8. It is safe to have sexual intercourse after the implant. But, it may be uncomfortable for a while.

9. You are not radioactive after the implant is removed.

10. Call the radiation oncology staff for any of these symptoms.

   • Fever above 100°F.
   • Pain that is not relieved with medicine.
   • Bleeding more than a normal menstrual period.
   • Burning with urination or blood in the urine lasting more than 24 hours.

Call the Radiation oncology Clinic at (608) 263-8500. If the clinic is closed, your call will be transferred to the answering service. They will put you in contact with the doctor on call.

Your doctor is ______________________________ Phone Number __________

You may also contact ______________________ at ______________________ for more questions or concerns regarding this procedure.

If you would need to reach the First Day Surgery Center for any reason, the phone number is (608) 265-8857.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2014 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5329