

## High Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy with Anesthesia A Patient Guide for Treatment of the Prostate

### What is brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy is a type of radiation therapy. High dose radiation is put into a small area of the prostate. This is done under anesthesia. You will be asleep and remain comfortable. This procedure is done in the Radiation Oncology Department.

### How do I get ready for brachytherapy?

Before coming in for the therapy:

- You will meet with a radiation nurse. They will ask you questions about your medical history. Your current medicines must be reviewed (name, dose, etc.).
- You will need lab work and an ECG.
- You will be asked about any prior difficulties with anesthesia.
- The radiation nurse may call you with more instructions.

### Important Information

Patients who get anesthesia are not allowed to drive for 24 hours. **On the day of your procedure you need a ride home. You should not drive. It can be a friend or family member. Someone (age 16 or older) needs to stay with you for 24 hours. You should not make important decisions for 24 hours.**

### The Brachytherapy Treatment

- Loose cotton stockings will be put on your legs to keep them warm. Compression leggings gently massage your lower legs. This helps the blood flow.
- Once asleep, your legs will be put up into leg rests. Your skin will be cleaned with a special soap. A small tube will be put into your bladder to

collect urine. This tube is removed before you go home.

- The radiation doctor places the treatment needles. Placement is checked by the CT scanner. You will be asleep the entire time.
- After the CT images are done, the radiation treatment is planned. Computer software is used to plan the treatment and medicine. The plan checked and approved by the radiation doctor.
- A tiny piece of radioactive material is used. It is about the size of a pencil lead. It is attached to a wire and kept inside a lead-lined storage box.
- During the treatment the matter moves out of the storage box and into the therapy needles. It stays there for your prescribed dose. It takes about 5-20 minutes.
- After the radiation dose has been given, the matter goes back into the storage box. It does not remain in your body. The treatment part of the procedure is over. The needles are removed. Your legs are lowered back onto the table. You then start to wake up. You are moved to the recovery room and watched for about an hour. When you are more awake you are moved to the discharge unit. Total recovery time is 2-3 hours.
- You will have something to drink once you are fully awake. Family members or friends can visit. You will then get ready to go home. The radiation doctor will talk to you and answer any questions. You may remember bits and pieces of the procedure or you may remember nothing at all.

**Because of the medicine given for anesthesia, you should not drive or drink alcohol. Do not use dangerous equipment or make any major decisions for 24 hours.**

#### **After the Procedure**

- Avoid hot tubs, pools or outdoor water sources for about 2 weeks. This is to prevent infections. Showers and sponge bathing are ok.
- Avoid activities like biking, horseback riding, motorcycling, etc. Sit on a pillow if you do a lot of driving. You need to let this area heal.
- It is OK to return to most types of work. We can provide work notes if needed.
- Avoid sexual activity for at least 2 weeks. You will notice blood or dried blood in the semen. This is normal and will clear up over time.

Listen to your body. If something causes you pain, don't do it.

We will prescribe an antibiotic for a few days after the procedure. You start taking the antibiotic the evening you go home.

Avoid blood thinning medicines like aspirin and ibuprofen (NSAIDs) for one week. Pain after this procedure is mild. You may use Tylenol (acetaminophen) as directed. If you are still having pain, please call.

#### **Future Visits**

You will have a follow-up visit 3 months after the procedure. We will do lab work to get a PSA at that time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **608-263-8500**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 3/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HFFY#8076.