Vaginal Brachytherapy Treatment

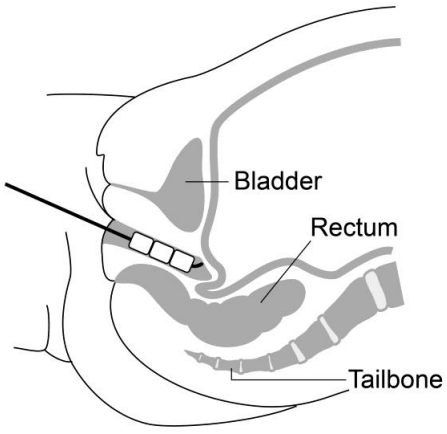
This handout explains what will happen during your radiation treatment. If you have any questions, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

Brachytherapy
Brachytherapy is a type of radiation treatment given to a small area. One or 2 small tubes, called applicators, are placed inside the vagina. Radiation travels into the applicator through thin cables.

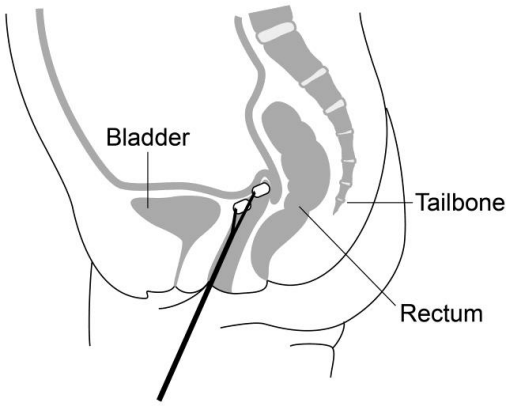
Your doctor will choose the dose of radiation you receive.

Treatment is given in Radiotherapy. You will have 3-5 treatments, with 1 or 2 treatments each week. Each treatment takes about 1 hour. You may also have daily external radiation treatments. You will only have 1 type of radiation treatment, internal or external, each day.

Applicators
Applicators come in different sizes and shapes. Your doctor will choose the one that fits you best. The pictures below show the applicators and where they are placed.



Vaginal Treatment with Cylinders



Vaginal Treatment with Ovoids

Before the Procedure

Medicine
Take your medicines as usual.

Diet
You may eat your normal diet, but avoid a large, heavy meal. You will lie flat on your back for about 1 hour during the procedure.

What to Bring
You may want to bring sandals or slippers to keep your feet warm. We have a small stereo in the room for your use also. You can bring your own music such as an iPod for music or your phone.

During the Procedure

Checking In
Arrive at the hospital about 15 minutes before your scheduled treatment. Park in the main hospital ramp and bring your parking card in with you. Check in at the Clinics Registration desk on Main Street (2nd Floor). Have your parking card stamped so you will not need to pay for parking. The person at this desk can tell you how to get to Radiotherapy. It is in module K4 in the basement (K4/B).

When you get to the department, check in at the reception desk and have a seat in the main waiting room. This is where your family or friends can wait for you.

Exam and Applicator Placement
A staff member will take you to the treatment room. You will be asked to change into a gown. You will need to remove all clothing from your waist down.

This part takes about 10-15 minutes. You will lie on your back with your legs in knee rests. You will stay in this position until the treatment is done.

Your doctor will do a pelvic exam to choose the size and shape of the applicator. The applicator is placed inside your vagina. You may feel some pressure, but it should not cause pain. Tell your doctor or nurse before the day of treatment if pelvic exams cause you severe pain or anxiety.

Radiation Treatment
This will take about 5-20 minutes.

A CT scan may need to be obtained at the time of the first treatment to check positioning of the applicators before the treatment begins.

Cables from the machine are attached to the applicator. The radiation will slide inside the applicator and stay there for the correct amount of time. You will not feel the treatment as it is given. You may hear a clicking or humming noise from the machine. You will be alone in the room. We will be able to see and hear you. We can also talk to you through a speaker.

After the treatment, the applicator will be removed, and the area cleaned. You will go back and change. Once you have changed, you may leave.

If you took a sedative, you cannot drive. There are no other restrictions.

Home Care

Bleeding and Discharge
You may have a small amount of vaginal bleeding or discharge. This is normal and should stop within 1-2 days.

Bladder
You may have burning or irritation when you first urinate. Drink 8-10 glasses of fluid each day for the next 1-2 days. Water is best.

Diarrhea
You may have mild diarrhea. This may be caused by irritation to the rectum from the radiation or anxiety about the treatment.

Feeling Tired
You may feel tired if you took medicine to help you relax. This effect should not last long.

Radiation Safety
You are only radioactive while the radiation treatment is being given. You are not radioactive after treatment. You can be around other people and pets as usual.

Vaginal Dilator/Vibrator
You will get a vaginal dilator or vibrator during one of your visits. Use it at home to help keep your vagina from getting tight and narrow.

Your doctor or nurse will teach you how to use it. You will also get a handout with instructions.

Sex After Treatment
It is safe to have sex between treatments unless your surgeon has told you not to.

Follow your surgeon's instructions based on your healing and how long it has been since surgery.

Follow-Up Visit
Your doctor will tell you when to return for a follow-up visit. It is one to two months after your last treatment.

When to Call
Call the clinic if you have:

- A fever above 100˚F.
- Abdominal pain.
- Burning with urination or blood in the urine lasting more than 24 hours.
- Any questions or concerns.

Who to Call
Please call if you have any questions or concerns.

The phone number for the Radiation Oncology Clinic is **(608) 915-1200**.

If you live outside of the Madison area, call **1-800-323-8942**. If the clinic is closed, your call will be transferred to our answering service. Ask to speak to the radiation oncology doctor on call. The doctor will call you back.

UW Health Carbone Cancer Center, Rockford
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Rockford, IL 61114
(779) 696-9400

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 © 9/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5492.