

Home Care after High Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy to the Prostate

This factsheet gives instructions for taking care of yourself after your High Dose Rate (HDR) brachytherapy. It also tells about side effects and how to manage them.

Preventing Infection

Take the antibiotics your cancer care team prescribed. Be sure to follow the directions and finish all the pills.

Daily Activity

For the first day or two after your procedure, take rest breaks often. If you have swelling, lying down can help.

Avoid these things for 1 week after your procedure:

- Bike riding
- Horseback riding
- Anything that puts pressure on the saddle area
- Other activity that takes a lot of effort

Sexual Activity

It is OK to have sex any time after the procedure. The amount of semen may be small.

Blood in the semen is common for about 1 month after the procedure. It will be dark brown or black. If it is bright red, call the Radiation Oncology clinic.

Follow-Up Appointments

We will schedule an appointment for you in Radiation Oncology about two weeks after the HDR brachytherapy. You will have a CT simulation for treatment planning/mapping for the external beam radiotherapy (EBRT). You will start EBRT about 2 weeks after your treatment planning appointment.

Possible Side Effects

You may have some side effects after the HDR brachytherapy. Your cancer care team can give you medicines and tips to help manage them.

Nausea. The anesthetics from the procedure may upset your stomach. After your procedure, start by drinking liquids only. You can slowly go back to your usual foods over the next 24 hours.

Pain. The area where the needles entered your body may be a little sore. Your cancer care team will give you medicine for pain and swelling. Use them as directed. Taking ibuprofen or acetaminophen (for example, Advil® or Tylenol®) should help. These medicines are available without a prescription.

Soreness and bruising. If you notice bruising in the treatment area, use ice packs for about 15 minutes. Repeat every few hours as needed. Sit in warm (not hot) water above the hips for about 15 minutes twice each day. After the bath, pat the skin dry with a towel. Do not rub. It may also help to wear soft, loose cotton underwear. This should only last for a few days.

Bladder problems. It is common to have some blood in the urine for a few weeks after the procedure. Drink at least two quarts of liquids each day to help clear blood from your bladder. You may have problems starting urine flow. You may feel burning when you urinate. The medicines your care team gave you will help. If you have problems starting the urine flow for more than 24–48 hours, your radiation doctor may need to give you a different medicine. You may also need a catheter tube to drain the urine.

Bleeding or spotting. After the procedure, you may notice a small amount of bleeding or spotting. You will be given a pad to wear to go home. If the bleeding lasts longer than 72 hours, call the Radiation Oncology Clinic.

Bowel problems: You may have more frequent bowel movements or diarrhea, which is loose, watery stools. Tell your care team if you have diarrhea. They can suggest foods and medicines to help. These tips may help with diarrhea:

- Wipe with alcohol-free baby wipes instead of toilet paper after bowel movements.
- Using a squirt bottle, rinse your anal area with water after each bowel movement.
- If your anal area gets sore or if you get hemorrhoids, sitting in a warm bath with water above the hips may help. Over-the-counter hemorrhoid products can also help.

When to call for help

Call your care team right away if any of these things happen:

- You have severe pain or bleeding.
- You can't empty your bladder.
- You have a fever higher than 100.3° F or chills.

Call Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Radiation Oncology Clinic 801-581-2396

After hours, weekends, and holidays

HCI Hospital Operator 801-587-7000

Ask for the radiation doctor on call. If you cannot talk to a doctor right away, go directly to the closest emergency department.