High Dose Rate Vaginal Vault Brachytherapy

Your radiation oncologist has recommended High Dose Rate (HDR) Vaginal Vault Brachytherapy. High Dose Rate Brachytherapy is delivered as an outpatient. You will receive one treatment per week for 3 weeks (typically on Thursdays). The treatment is designed to reduce the risk of the cancer returning in the vagina.

INSERTING THE APPLICATOR

- Vaginal Vault Brachytherapy is delivered with a cylindrical vaginal applicator.
- On the first day of treatment, the doctor will perform a pelvic examination.
- The examination helps the doctor choose the applicator size that is right for you.
- The vaginal applicator is then covered with a condom and inserted into your vagina.
- Insertion of the applicator may be mildly uncomfortable, but is typically not painful.

RADIATION TREATMENT

- Once the applicator is inserted, the radiation staff will leave the treatment room.
- An X-ray will be taken on the first day of treatment. The radiation staff will then plan your radiation treatment.
- Once the planning is done, the applicator is connected to the radiation source.
- The radiation source travels up the center of the applicator to deliver radiation to the top of the vagina.
- During the treatment, you will be asked to lie still and breathe normally. You will be alone in the room. The radiation staff can see you on a television monitor and can speak with you through an intercom. Treatment delivery times vary from 7 – 15 minutes.
- The radiation machine switches off on its own after the treatment is finished, but can be stopped at any time if needed.
AFTER THE TREATMENT

- Once the treatment is finished, the radiation source goes back into the machine. The radiation staff returns to the room and the applicator is removed. You will not be radioactive following the treatment (i.e. you will not emit radiation).
- You may go home following the treatment.

SIDE EFFECTS

- Side effects from radiation may occur during treatment (early side effects) or many months to years after treatment (late side effects).

1. Possible early side effects (tend to be mild)
   - Temporary loose stools or diarrhea
   - Temporary urinary irritation
   - Vaginal dryness/irritation/discharge
   - Fatigue

2. Possible late side effects
   - Vaginal narrowing
   - Vaginal dryness/irritation/discharge
   - Discomfort with intercourse (uncommon)
   - Damage to the bowel or bladder (very uncommon)

VAGINAL DILATOR

- On the last day of treatment you will be given a vaginal dilator as well as instructions for use.
- The purpose of the vaginal dilator is to minimize vaginal narrowing.
- Minimizing vaginal narrowing (1) allows the doctor to perform adequate speculum exams in follow up and (2) minimizes discomfort should you choose to be sexually active.

Please note that you will have the opportunity to meet with members of our gynaecologic treatment team (radiation therapists, nurses, doctors) on the first day of treatment to answer any questions you might have about your treatment or about this document.