

High Dose Rate Brachytherapy

Treatment Information For People with Prostate
Cancer

Inside this resource:

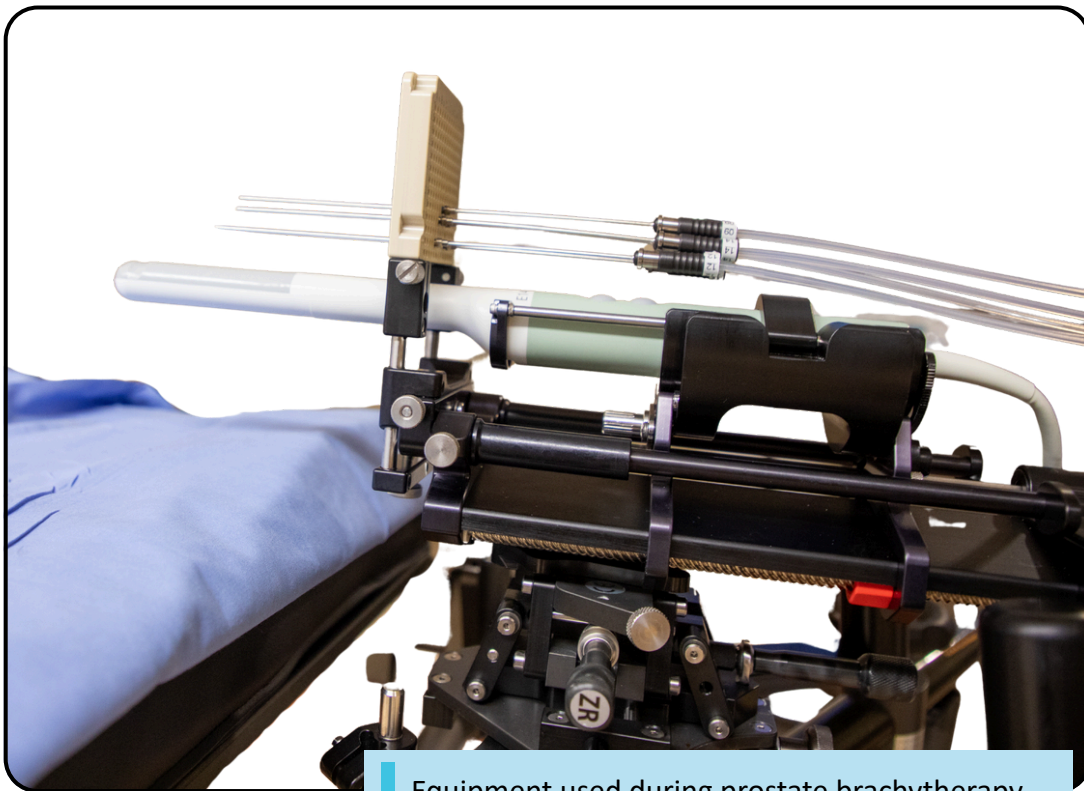
- What is High Dose Rate Brachytherapy?
- What to Expect During the Procedure
- Side Effects
- Notes

What is High Dose Rate Prostate Brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy (bra-kee-ther-uh-pee) is a type of radiation therapy. Radiation therapy helps to kill cancer cells by making it hard for them to multiply and grow.

High Dose Rate (HDR) Prostate brachytherapy is a treatment that is given inside of your body. It allows radiation to be given inside of, or next to, the cancer. Since this is a very precise way of giving radiation, a higher dose of radiation can be used with less harm to nearby tissues.

With a high dose, internal radiation treatment a radiation source is placed inside of your body. It is left there for a short period of time to deliver radiation into your prostate gland.



Equipment used during prostate brachytherapy.

Radiation Oncologists must get special training to give brachytherapy. This means the doctor you see for brachytherapy might be different than the Radiation Oncologist you see for your other radiation treatments.

Your Radiation Oncologist for brachytherapy is:

What To Expect During the Procedure

The procedure has two key parts:

1. Placing treatment catheters (needles) into your prostate.
2. Your HDR brachytherapy treatment. This is when radiation is given directly to the whole prostate gland.

Once asleep, a bladder catheter is inserted to view the urethra (the tube your pee comes out of). During the procedure, an ultrasound probe is placed in your rectum (bum). The ultrasound probe helps guide the doctor as they place treatment catheters (needles) into your prostate. These needles are very small and thin. A radioactive source travels through the needles for 10-20 minutes. This allows radiation to be given to your prostate gland.

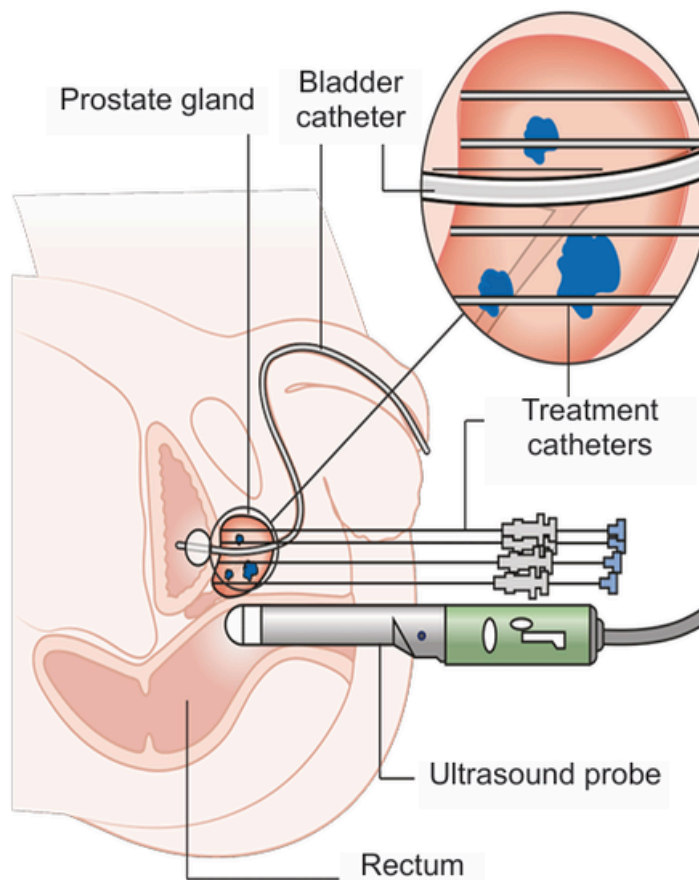


Image of the bladder catheter, treatment needles, and ultrasound probe. Blue blobs show an example of where the cancer might be in the prostate gland. *Image adopted from Alberta Health Services.*

Once the HDR brachytherapy is finished, the radioactive source goes back into the machine. No radiation is left in your body. The needles are slowly and safely removed. You will then be sent to day surgery to recover for 3-4 hours. Before you are sent home, your healthcare team will make sure you are able to pee. **You are not radioactive after your treatment.**

Side Effects

How To Contact Your Healthcare Team

As with any procedure, there is a risk of side effects. Each possible side effect is listed below. Some side effects are more serious than others. Pay close attention to the action you must take if you have a side effect. If needed, use the contact information below to call your healthcare team.

WRHN Cancer Centre	CareChart Digital Health
Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. 519-749-4380 x 5779 for Radiation Department	After-hours support once the cancer centre is closed: Monday to Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. Open 24 hours a day on weekends /holidays 1-877-681-3057

Urinary Obstruction & Irritation

After brachytherapy your prostate may swell. This swelling may block the flow of pee causing a urinary obstruction. When pee is not able to pass through your urethra (the tube you pee from) it can cause:

- Sharp pains in your lower back or sides
- Infection
- Injury to your urinary tract and kidneys
- Kidney failure

You may have peed before you left the hospital. But this problem can still happen a few days after your procedure.

After your brachytherapy procedure it is common to have:

- Bladder fullness, discomfort in your bladder, or feeling like you have a urinary tract infection.
- Changes to how you pee: Peeing more often, peeing less often, peeing overnight, start/stop stream, rushing to get to the washroom, or burning when you pee.



Go straight to your nearest emergency department if you are NOT able to pee (at all) for 6-8 hours
OR

If you live out of region and are having symptoms of a urinary obstruction

If you have concerns about any symptoms for urinary obstruction:

- Call the Radiation Department at WRHN Cancer Centre on weekdays
- Call CareChart Digital Health for after-hours support, on weekends, or holidays

Infection

If you have fever (temperature over 38°C or higher) and chills after the procedure this may be due to an infection. **If you develop a fever, call your healthcare team right away.**

Urinary Symptoms

Common urinary symptoms can appear right after your brachytherapy procedure. These include:

- Urgently feeling like you have to pee
- Going pee more often
- Feeling some burning when you pee
- Having trouble getting your stream of pee started
- Having a slower stream than normal

These side effects often go away within a few days. To help manage them you can try:

- Limiting alcohol and caffeinated drinks (like coffee, tea, or cola)
- Sitting down when peeing
- Drinking most of your fluid during the day to limit peeing at night

You may have been given a medicine to help manage these symptoms. Take it as prescribed.

Blood or Blood Clots in Your Pee

Within the first 24 hours after your procedure you may see some blood or blood clots in your pee. Passing clots might feel uncomfortable. Drink enough fluids to help flush out your bladder.

If you are passing many clots, or continue to bleed after the first 24 hours, call your healthcare team.

Rectal Discomfort

After taking the ultrasound probe out of your rectum (bum) it may feel tender or sore. **Call your healthcare team if you are bleeding from your rectum for more than 1 day.**

Bruising of the Scrotum

After the procedure your scrotum (testicles) and base of the penis may appear dark blue or purple. Do not be alarmed, the bruising will heal over the next few weeks.

Pain at the Implant Site

You may feel tender at the implant site between your legs. This is common. Ice the area to help manage swelling. You can buy a soft gel icepack from your local pharmacy. Apply this to the area for 10-15 minutes, up to 3-4 times a day.

Take extra strength acetaminophen (like Tylenol®) if needed for pain. Take 2 tablets every 6 hours. **If you are unable to manage your pain, call your healthcare team.**

Notes

Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other healthcare professionals.



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