

# Breast Brachytherapy

## What you need to know

Breast brachytherapy involves placing a balloon catheter or device inside the breast at the time of breast surgery or as an outpatient in the office. The purpose of the catheter/device is to deliver radiation to tissues inside the breast around the area where the cancer was removed.

## After Placement

- Wear a bra all the time, even when sleeping, for support, comfort and protection of the catheter/device.
- Don't sleep on your stomach or the side where the balloon is located to avoid putting pressure on the balloon.
- Don't shower while the catheter/device is in place.
- You may take a sponge bath and wash your hair in the sink, or sit in a shallow tub of water with your bra on, but don't get the catheter wet.
- Don't do any heavy lifting with the arm on the treatment side.
- Don't do any repetitive arm movements, such as folding sheets, vacuuming or cleaning.
- You may take oral pain medication as prescribed, if needed.
- If you're given antibiotics, take them as directed until all the medication is finished.
- Don't change the bandage or handle the catheter/device, unless you're instructed to do so.
- Don't remove the plastic caps on the end of the catheter/device.
- Temporary side effects from the placement of the catheter include: breast tenderness, red or clear drainage from the catheter insertion site, swelling of the breast, mild redness of the breast and/or bruising of the breast.
- Please report the following side effects to your radiation oncologist: sudden onset of a large amount of drainage from the catheter insertion site, hard/red/hot/painful areas in the breast or temperature greater than 101 degrees.

## Radiation Instructions

After the catheter is placed, you will have a CT scan taken which is used in planning the radiation treatment. Radiation therapy treatments will be scheduled twice a day at least six hours apart.

- The radiation oncology staff will handle your catheter/device and dressings. The dressings will be changed twice a day by the nurse.
- You won't be radioactive from this procedure. The radioactive source is placed into the catheter/device during your treatment and removed after each treatment. You may have normal contact with all your friends and family members without concern.
- You may drive yourself for your twice-daily treatments.
- After your last treatment, your catheter/device will be removed in the Radiation Oncology Department. You may take something for

discomfort one hour before your last treatment.

- You may shower on the third day after the catheter is removed. Let the skin tapes fall off.
- You may use a moisturizing cream, such as Vitamin E cream to your skin after the catheter is removed.
- Side effects from radiation treatment include: a reddened area on the breast, swelling of the breast, dry/flaky or peeling/blistering of skin overlying area of treatment.
- If skin peels or blisters and is moist or open, please call the radiation oncology nurse.
- Please don't take aspirin, Ibuprophen, Advil, Motrin or any type of blood thinning or anti-inflammatory medication, neither over-the-counter or prescription. If you're on prescription blood thinners, you need to notify your primary care physician that you're stopping these medications. You may resume these medications 24 hours after the catheter is removed.

## Nutrition

Please eat at a normal, healthy diet. There are no special precautions to be taken concerning your diet. If you need information on a normal, healthy diet, please speak to the radiation oncology nurse.

Don't take vitamin E or vitamin C tablets. You may take a multivitamin.

**Important Note:** While you're undergoing radiation therapy, pregnancy is not advised. If you're not sure if you're pregnant or think you might be, please report this to your radiation therapy physician immediately.

## Questions? Ask Us.

**Remember: Report any side effects to the Radiation Oncology staff.**

If you have concerns or questions, please ask them during your treatment appointment. If you need to speak with someone urgently, please call:

- Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Radiation Oncology Center at 314-251-6844
- After hours, to reach a physician call 314-663-3011



### Mercy Hospital

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