

What to Expect When Getting High-Dose Rate (HDR) Brachytherapy to the Esophagus

For patients with cancer of the esophagus

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Name: _____

MRN: _____

You have been scheduled for treatment on:

Date: _____ Time: _____

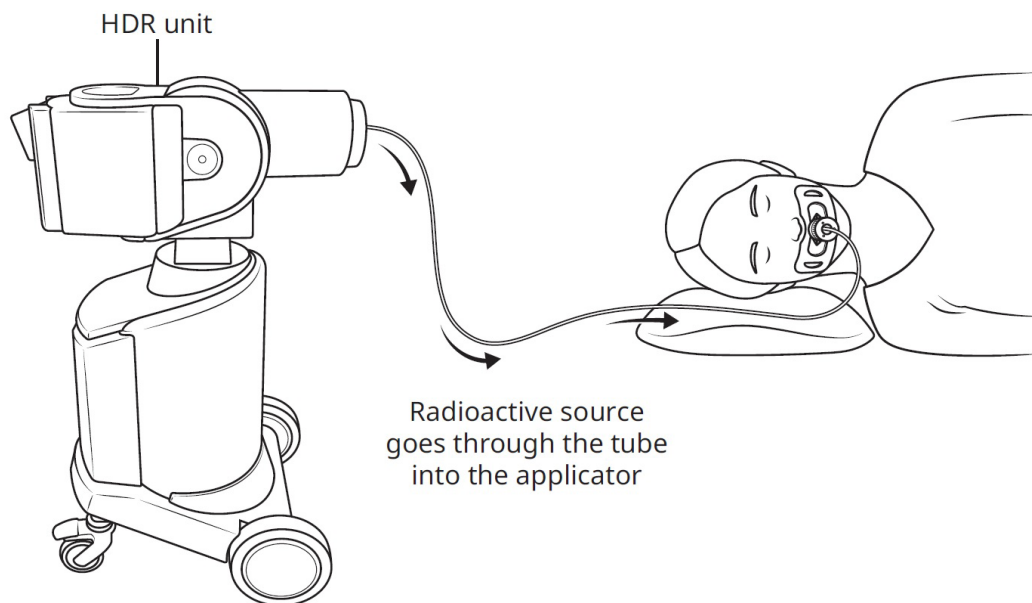
Date: _____ Time: _____

Check in at the Reception Desk on Level 2B of the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

What is brachtherapy?

Brachytherapy is a type of internal radiation treatment where a “sealed” radioactive source is placed into or near a tumour. The machine that delivers the treatment is called a high-dose rate (HDR) unit. The treatment unit stores the radioactive source.

To treat cancer of the esophagus, a long narrow tube called an applicator is inserted through your mouth and into the esophagus. The applicator is connected to the HDR unit and the radioactive source enters the applicator to deliver the treatment. At the end of the treatment the applicator is removed.



What Pre-admission tests do I need?

We will give you a sedative (calming medicine to help you relax) for your brachytherapy treatment. To make sure it is safe to give you a sedative and to prepare you for your treatment, you will need to have the following test at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre:

- blood tests
- ECG
- chest x-ray

A doctor will check your results and let you know if you need more tests or medications. A nurse will call you only if you need further instructions.

How do I prepare for treatment?

Do NOT eat or drink after midnight the night before your treatment.
It is important to have an empty stomach when you get your sedative.

- Bring all your medications to the hospital with you on the day of your treatment.
- If you normally take high blood pressure medication, take your pill with a sip of water around 5:00 am on the morning of your treatment.
- If you have diabetes, do NOT take your medication on the morning of the procedure.
- If you take anti-coagulant (blood thinner) medication, do NOT take it on the morning of the procedure.
- Remove nail polish from your fingernails. You will have a monitor on your finger that measures the amount of oxygen in your blood.
- Arrange to have someone drive you home after your treatment. You will feel sleepy from the sedative.

How long is my appointment?

You will be at the hospital for about 3 to 4 hours.

What happens during my appointment?

Before treatment:

- We put an intravenous or IV tube into your hand or arm. We use the IV to give you the sedative that helps you relax and feel sleepy during treatment.
- If you wear dentures we will remind you to remove them.
- Before we start, you gargle with medicine to numb your mouth and throat.
- We then move you onto your left side and place a mask in your mouth. The mask keeps your mouth open and holds the applicator in the treatment position.
- A device called an endoscope is put in your mouth through the mask. The endoscope has a camera which helps the doctor see the location of the tumour in the esophagus.
- Once the treatment area is identified, the doctor removes the endoscope and puts the applicator through the mask and down into your esophagus. The applicator is held in position with the mask.
- We take x-rays to check the position of the applicator and to plan the amount of treatment time you will need.

Treatment:

- Once the catheter is in the correct position, it is attached to the treatment machine.
- You get treatment for about 10 to 15 minutes. You will not feel the treatment.
- The brachytherapy team leaves the room during the treatment. The team uses a camera to watch you and an intercom to talk to you during your treatment.

After treatment:

- When the treatment is finished, the applicator is removed.
- You go to a recovery room on the 3rd floor of Princess Margaret to rest until you are ready to go home.
- You can go home once the nurse checks that your throat is no longer numb and you are able to swallow.
- We give you a follow-up appointment to see your radiation oncologist.
- **You must have someone take you home. Do NOT drive for 24 hours after your treatment.**

How will I feel after my treatment?

- You may feel sleepy or tired for many hours after your treatment. It is important to rest.
- You may have a sore throat for 24 to 48 hours. You can take Tylenol or other pain medicine as directed by your doctor. You can also use throat lozenges.
- You may have a cough that brings up mucus or sometimes blood. This is normal and should last for a few days or up to a week.
- You may have trouble swallowing.

How can I help my recovery?

- ✓ Avoid alcohol and commercial tobacco
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids
- ✓ Eat foods and drink fluids at room temperature
- ✓ Eat foods that are soft and not too spicy
- ✓ Eat slowly and chew well before you swallow
- ✓ Slowly increase the amount of food you eat

Call the brachytherapy team if you have any questions.

Radiation Oncologist: _____ Phone: _____

Radiation Therapist: _____ Phone: _____

SUMMARY

Important information for your esophagus brachytherapy

- Date and check-in time: _____
- Check-in location: Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Level 2B
- Blood tests and ECG: Princess Margaret Cancer Centre – Main Floor
- No eating or drinking starting midnight the night before your treatment
- The only medications you **may** take on treatment day with a tiny sip of water are: high blood pressure pill, thyroid pill and psychiatric pill
- Do NOT take blood thinners and diabetes medication
- Bring all your medications to the hospital
- Someone must take you home after treatment
- Do not drive for 24 hours after your treatment



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