Home Care Instructions
After Gynecologic Brachytherapy

You have been treated with High Dose Internal Radiation. This type of treatment is also called Brachytherapy.

After the Procedure
You may have the following:

• Discomfort and tenderness in the area where your procedure was done.
• Small amounts of bloody drainage is normal.
• The inside of your vagina may feel like it has a sunburn. It may be red, irritated, or sore.
• Your skin may also look like it has a sunburn.
• There may be some hair loss in the area that was treated.
• Fatigue (feeling tired with or without activity).

Precautions After the Procedure

• You were given a medicine to make you sleep during the procedure. You may feel drowsy for several hours after the procedure.
• You should not drive, operate any heavy equipment or do any important business for the rest of the day.
• A responsible adult should be with you for at least 4 hours after you are discharged.
Care at Home
The following instructions will help you or your caregiver when you get home after your procedure.

Pain Medicines
For mild pain, you may take an over-the-counter medicine, such as:
- Tylenol or Acetaminophen
- Motrin, Advil or generic Ibuprofen

For moderate pain or pain not controlled with the medicines listed above, please call your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe a pain medicine.
- Take pain medicine just the way your doctor tells you to.
- Take pain medicine before your pain becomes severe.
- As your pain gets better, decrease the amount of pain medicine you are taking.
- Do not drink alcohol, drive, or use machinery while you are taking pain medicine.
- Call your doctor if your pain medicine is not working.

Diet
- You may eat your regular diet.
- Drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages.
- You may need to change your diet to help your bowel movements become normal again.
  - For loose stools:
    - Follow the **BRAT diet** (Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast)
    - Drink plenty of fluid
      - Water, gatorade, broth, and diluted cranberry and grape juice
  - For hard stools:
    - Drink extra water and other fluids like juice, tea, and broth.
    - Eat foods high in fiber (fruits and vegetables).
    - Take a stool softener such as Docusate.
    - You may take Milk of Magnesia to soften your stool.

Home Care Instructions After Gynecologic Brachytherapy
Activity
You may return to work/school on ________________________.

You may go back to doing your normal activities in 24 hours or when able.

Fatigue (feeling tired with or without activity)
• Is the most common side effect of radiation therapy.
• May slowly go away after you complete treatment.

Sexual Activity
• Do not insert anything inside your vagina until you have your follow-up appointment unless instructed differently by your radiation oncology doctor.

• Follow-up appointments may be in 1 month after your treatment is complete.

• Your doctor will tell you when it is okay for you to have sexual intercourse again.

• You may need to use lubricants during sexual intercourse due to scarring and dryness of the vagina after radiation therapy.

• A vaginal dilator will be provided to prevent narrowing of the vagina. The radiation oncology nurse will teach you how to use it.
  ▶ A vaginal dilator is a solid, round plastic tube that is put into the vagina for 10 minutes two to four times a week.
  ▶ This device is given to you at your first follow-up visit.
  ▶ Sexual intercourse and/or the use of the vaginal dilator helps reduce the amount of vaginal scarring that can happen after radiation therapy.
Personal Hygiene
Wash the treated area with mild soap and warm water. You can take showers and/or baths.

- **Do not use deodorant soaps.** These soaps may cause more irritation.
- Soaps safe to use include: **Dove, Basis, Pears, Neutrogena, Pure and Natural, Oil of Olay.**
- Gently pat your skin dry or use a hair dryer on the cool setting.

- **Do not use very hot or cold temperatures in this area.**
  - Avoid hot showers and the use of hot water bottles, heating pads, or ice bags unless instructed by your doctor.
  - Do not sit in jacuzzis, hot tubs, or saunas.

- **Do not scratch, rub, or massage your skin.**
  - Wearing loose clothing may help avoid rubbing the skin.
  - If the area itches, contact the Radiation Oncology Department.
  - Use the creams and lotions given to you by the nurse that are 100% Aloe Vera.
    - Using these lotions will not prevent skin reactions, but they can make you feel more comfortable.
    - Check with the nurse before using any other lotion in the area that was treated.

- **Sitz Bath or Epsom Salt Bath**
  - May be recommended if you are having vaginal irritation.
  - You may use warm water and Epsom Salt or Baking Soda. Follow the instructions on the package.

- **Vaginal Discharge**
  - Some discharge is normal. Use sanitary napkins if needed.
  - **Do not** use tampons until your doctor tells you it is okay.
  - Call the Radiation Oncology Clinic if you have any questions or concerns.

- **Urinary Burning**
  - Call your doctor or nurse if you have burning when you urinate.
Call your doctor if you have:

- Increased amount of pain or pain not relieved by medicine
- Heavy vaginal bleeding (soaking a pad in one hour)
- Vaginal discharge with a bad odor
- Problems urinating
- Chills or fever of 101 Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees Celsius) or higher

**Remember: In an emergency, always call 911**

**Weekdays (Monday - Friday) between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.**

Call the James Radiation Oncology Department at (614) 293-8415 and ask for the Brachy Nurse.

**On weekdays after 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays:**

Call The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center operator at (614) 293-8000 and ask them to page the Radiation Oncologist on call.

Your next scheduled appointment is on ______________ at ______________

with Dr. _________________________.