

# Prostate Cancer: Brachytherapy Discharge Instructions



You've had a cancer treatment called permanent brachytherapy. Sometimes it's called internal radiation or low dose rate (LDR) radiation implants. About 100 tiny radioactive seeds were put into your prostate gland. Each seed is smaller than a grain of rice. The radioactive material in them kills the nearby cancer cells. The seeds will lose their radioactivity over the next weeks and months. The seeds will stay in your prostate the rest of your life, but you can't feel them and they won't harm you.

## Home care

Follow all your healthcare provider's instructions. You may be told to the following:

- Rest as needed. Recovery takes a few days. It's normal to feel tired.
- Drink plenty of fluids for at least 2 days after your procedure.
- Limit the amount of time you are very close (within about 3 feet) to people for the first 2 weeks after the seeds are put in. Don't hold children or pets on your lap the first 2 weeks, and then only briefly for the next 2 months. Also limit your time around pregnant people for a few months.
- Don't lift anything heavy for a few days.
- Go back to your normal activities a few days after the procedure. Ask if there's anything you can't do, like use a riding lawn mower or ride a bike.
- Follow the instructions given to you about straining your urine. Sometimes the seeds move outside the prostate. Seeds placed near the bladder or urethra may come out during urination. You might be asked to urinate into a strainer. If a seed comes out, don't touch it with your hands. Use the supplied tweezers and put it in the radiation protection envelope that was given to you. Save the packet to give to your healthcare provider at your next visit or do what your provider told you. Don't touch the seed with your hands.
- Expect some blood in your urine for a few days.
- Expect some burning during urination or ejaculation for a few days.
- Use a condom during sex for the first 2 weeks. It will protect your partner if a seed comes out during ejaculation.
- Expect some pain and swelling in your scrotum or swelling in your perineum. (This is the area between your anus and your scrotum.) Ask your provider if you should use an ice pack. Ask how to correctly apply it.
- Take your pain medicine, antibiotics, or other medicines as instructed.

## Living with seeds in your body

The seeds will give off radiation for a certain period of time. Talk with your healthcare team about what you should and shouldn't do after the seeds are put in. Remember that over time the radiation decreases and goes away. (It takes up to 10 months until all the radiation is gone.) The first few weeks are when you may need to be cautious and change your usual activities.

Rarely, the seeds might set off airport security systems, even after the radiation is gone. Ask your healthcare provider for a card or letter that says you have the seeds in your body. You can show it to security staff.

## Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

## **When to call your healthcare provider**

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Blood in your urine
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- New lumps, bumps, or swelling
- Pain that doesn't go away or gets worse
- Rectal bleeding
- Severe nausea or vomiting
- Skin rashes, bruises, or bleeding
- Trouble urinating
- Pain or burning with urination
- Redness, swelling, warmth, or pain in an arm or leg

Be sure you know what number to call to get help after office hours and on weekends and holidays.

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