

Discharge Instructions for Balloon Breast Brachytherapy



You had a procedure done to put place a device that delivers radiation to your breast (balloon breast brachytherapy catheter). It is used to give you internal radiation treatment for breast cancer. This is also called accelerated partial breast radiation therapy. The end of the catheter is in the same place the cancer was inside your breast. A small balloon is filled with salt water (saline) on the end. It holds it snugly in place. The catheter and balloon will stay in for 1 or 2 weeks, or until your treatment is done. Part of the catheter sticks out of your skin and has a protective plastic cap on the end.

You get your radiation treatments through this catheter. It's hooked up to a computer-controlled machine that moves the radiation source in and out of the catheter. A wire with a radioactive pellet on the end goes into and delivers radiation from the catheter. This takes about 5 to 20 minutes. It's done twice a day (about 6 hours apart) for about 5 days.

It's important to understand that the radiation only works during the time that the radioactive pellet is inside the balloon. It's removed by the same machine that put it in. As soon as the catheter is capped, you can leave the treatment room. You are not radioactive and don't have to worry about exposing other people to radiation.

Catheter site care

Ask a member of your treatment team:

- How you should care for the catheter site and any wound closure tapes
- How to clean the catheter exit site
- How to bathe or shower while the catheter is in place
- If you should wear a special bra

Other home care

Other suggestions include:

- Do your normal activities as you feel able. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions about what you can and can't do.
- Take all your medicines as advised. Make sure you know what they're for. Also know when and how to take them and what side effects to watch for.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised
- Chills
- Sudden and large amount of fluid that leaks from catheter site (may be red, pink, or clear)
- Any unusual bleeding or bleeding that soaks the bandage
- New breast redness or pain
- Pus-like or bad-smelling drainage from the catheter site

- The cap comes off the catheter
- Cough or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pain that doesn't go away, especially if it's always in the same place
- New or unusual lumps, bumps, or swelling

Know what problems to watch for and when you need to call your healthcare provider. Also make sure you know how to get help any time you have problems or questions, including after office hours, on weekends, and on holidays.

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