# Brachytherapy Prevents Recurrence With Fewer Side Effects

**The study:** Dutch researchers compared the use of vaginal brachytherapy (radiation therapy given internally, using implants) to external-beam radiation therapy (radiation given from a machine outside the body) to treat uterine cancer that has a higher risk of recurrence (cancer that comes back after treatment). For women with this type of uterine cancer, the standard treatment is surgery followed by external-beam radiation therapy. Brachytherapy is typically used with external-beam radiation therapy for women with advanced uterine cancer.

In this study, 214 women with uterine cancer that has a moderate- to high-risk of recurrence were given external-beam radiation therapy to the pelvis, and 213 women received vaginal brachytherapy. All 427 women had previously been treated with surgery to remove the uterus and ovaries.

**The results:** Brachytherapy is as effective as external-beam radiation therapy and has fewer side effects. After three years, women who received brachytherapy had similar rates of recurrence as women who received external-beam radiation therapy. For example, about 1% of women had a recurrence in the pelvis, and 6% had a recurrence to other areas of the body, regardless of the type of radiation therapy. In addition, 90% of women who received brachytherapy were still alive after three years, compared with 91% of women who received external-beam radiation therapy.

The most common side effect in this study was diarrhea, which was more common in the women who received external-beam radiation therapy both during and after treatment.

**What this means for patients**

?Based on this study, we expect that vaginal brachytherapy will be adopted as the new standard of care for women with this type of uterine cancer,? said lead author Remi A. Nout, MD, a Radiation Oncology Resident in the Department of Clinical Oncology at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands. ?This treatment is simpler and just as effective as external-beam radiation therapy, and it makes treatment and recovery for many women much more manageable, allowing them to have a better quality of life during and after treatment.?

**What to ask the doctor**

- What is the stage of my cancer?
- What is my current treatment plan? Will I receive radiation therapy?
- Would I benefit from brachytherapy instead of external-beam radiation therapy?
- How might this treatment affect my quality of life?

**For more information**

Cancer.Net Guide to Uterine Cancer [1]

Cancer.Net Feature: Understanding Radiation Therapy [2]

Cancer.Net Feature: Frequently Asked Questions About Radiation Therapy [3]

Cancer.Net Feature: Side Effects of Radiation Therapy [4]

**Links:**
[1] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Uterine+Cancer
[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Radiation+Therapy
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Frequently+Asked+Questions+About+Radiation+Therapy
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Side+Effects+of+Radiation+Therapy