

Options in the Treatment of Early Stage Breast Cancer

Joseph Bennett M.D.

Today, more and more women with early stage breast cancer are able to treat their cancer effectively and preserve their breasts through an option called breast conservation therapy (BCT). BCT begins with a lumpectomy, the surgical removal of the cancerous tumor. The lumpectomy is generally followed by seven weeks of external beam radiation therapy (EBRT), during which radiation is directed at the whole breast. This combination of surgery and radiation works extremely well to fight breast cancer.

Now another option is offered in Citrus County, at the Robert Boissoneault Oncology Institute. This new option is called the MammoSite Radiation Therapy System. This alternative is an internal treatment option, and it only takes five days to complete.

MammoSite RTS is a form of partial breast irradiation. It works by delivering radiation from inside the lumpectomy cavity (the space that is left after the tumor is removed) directly to the tissue surrounding the cavity where cancer is most likely to recur. Radiation therapy with MammoSite RTS can be completed in five days. MammoSite RTS is a small, soft balloon attached to a thin catheter (tube) that is placed inside the lumpectomy cavity. In order to deliver radiation, a tiny radioactive source, called a seed, is placed within the balloon by a computer-controlled machine. Because the seed is inside the balloon, radiation is directed only to the area of the breast where cancer is most likely to recur. When used as primary therapy – the only form of radiation following a lumpectomy – treatment is given twice a day for five days.

This treatment is not appropriate for all patients. Patients must meet strict criteria to qualify for this treatment. These criteria include small tumors and negative lymph nodes. If a patient does not meet these criteria, whole breast external beam radiation is more appropriate. As with any medical procedure, talk to your doctor and carefully consider all treatment options before deciding. For women with small tumors and negative lymph nodes, this treatment alternative may be appropriate and allow the patients to complete their course of radiation therapy much faster.

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