

PATIENT INFORMATION

BCG Bladder Treatment

What is BCG?

'BCG' stands for 'Bacillus Calmette-Guerin'. It is commonly used as a vaccine against tuberculosis (TB), but has also been developed into an effective treatment for certain types of bladder cancer. It **cannot** be given to anyone who is suffering from active TB.

How does the treatment work?

BCG activates an immune response within the body (as TB itself would do), which also provokes an attack on cancerous cells in the bladder lining. This form of treatment is known as 'immunotherapy'.

What does the treatment involve?

You will be asked to come to the hospital as an outpatient once a week for 6 weeks. Your first appointment will take about 2¼ hours. If all goes well with this, the rest of your visits will only take 15-20 minutes.

How is the treatment given?

Firstly, your nurse or doctor will have to prepare the treatment at the bedside. In order to protect him/herself from the medication whilst it is in powder form, he/she must wear a protective gown and mask. Once water has been added to the powder within its vial, it can be considered to be 'stable' and safe to those administering/receiving it.

A fine, lubricated plastic tube called a catheter is then passed into the bladder and the medication (approximately half a teacup of liquid) is given through it.

The catheter is then completely removed. You will be asked not to pass water for two hours in order to hold the medication inside the bladder, allowing it to treat the bladder lining.

On your first visit, you will be asked to stay at the hospital for this time and then to pass water before going home. For the remaining 5 weeks, you will be able to travel home with the medication in your bladder and pass water at home at the end of the two hours.

Please ensure that you have a supply of household bleach at home before starting your treatment, since it is recommended that you pour two cupfuls of bleach onto your urine in the toilet and leave for 15 minutes before flushing for the first 6 hours following each treatment.

When is treatment not given?

The medication is for treatment of the bladder lining only, and it could be unsafe if it were to enter the blood stream. Therefore, if any blood is seen in your urine on passage of your

catheter (suggesting that there might be an open or raw area on the bladder lining), the treatment cannot be given that day.

Are there any side effects?

Many patients (up to 90%) find that the treatment irritates the bladder (like 'cystitis'), resulting in passing urine more frequently than usual with some urgency/discomfort. This can last for 24 hours or so. You may also see some debris and blood in your urine. Although the BCG does not enter 'the system', the body's immune response can sometimes cause some temporary flu-like symptoms, such as feeling feverish, 'achey' and generally unwell. This usually wears off after a day or two, but can occasionally force you to lie down for a while. You may take Paracetamol to help with this.

If symptoms prove to be severe, or do not wear off on their own, please contact the Urology Nurse Practitioner at the hospital on 01284 712806 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday or your own GP if outside these hours.

Things you can do to help your treatment run smoothly

Beforehand – You should not drink any fluids for **Four** hours before your treatment. This will result in the kidneys producing less urine, thus preventing the over-dilution of BCG when it is in your bladder. This will also make it easier for you to "hold on" for the necessary two hours. You may eat as normal.

If you normally take a diuretic (a 'water tablet'), please do **not** take this until after your treatment is completed that day.

And afterwards – It is advisable that gentlemen sit rather than stand to urinate (to prevent splashing), and that everyone washes their hands and genitals with ordinary soap and water after passing out their medication. You might wish to bring a small wash bag with you at your first visit for this purpose.

Drink plenty of fluids for 24 hours after the treatment to flush any remaining drug out of the bladder.

Six weeks after completion of your treatment we will have a look in your bladder (cystoscopy) under general anaesthetic so that biopsies can be taken to assess whether or not the treatment has worked. You will receive further information on this procedure in due course.

Other information

Sexual transmission of BCG has never been reported, but you and your partner are advised to use a condom during sexual intercourse whilst you are being treated with BCG, and for one week after completion of your treatment.