

BCG Patient Information

What is BCG?

BCG or Bacillus Calmette-Guerin is a medication given directly into the bladder. It contains bacteria that create an immune response in the bladder which can eliminate cancer cells and prevent other cells in the lining of the bladder from becoming malignant. This treatment was discovered in Kingston, Ontario by Dr. A. Morales.

Who is suitable for BCG?

This treatment is given to people who have been diagnosed with early stage bladder cancer. This type of cancer has been found in the lining of your bladder, and your urologist has recommended this therapy to help prevent further occurrences of bladder cancer.

Who should not receive BCG?

You should not receive BCG if you:

- Have blood in your urine that you can see,
- Have a poorly functioning immune system (HIV/AIDS, high dose steroid therapy, etc.),
- Are unable to hold your urine at all,
- Have a urinary tract infection,
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding,
- Have had a previous severe illness from BCG treatment,
- Have tuberculosis.

How do you prepare for the treatment?

Please do not drink fluids for two hours prior to your treatment, to limit the amount of urine in your bladder.

Please alert your nurses/doctors prior to treatment if you are taking prednisone or dexamethasone (two types of steroids) or ciprofloxacin (an antibiotic), as these may affect the results of BCG treatment.

How often will I receive treatment?

You will receive BCG treatment once per week for six weeks. Your urologist may want you to receive further treatments in the future, which he will discuss with you.

How is the treatment administered?

The treatment will be administered in the hospital. You will receive a letter of appointment stating the date and time to attend. Your hospital admission will last approximately two hours on each occasion. When you arrive for treatment, a nurse will ask you a few general questions about your health. The treatment is given while you are lying on a bed. A small tube called a catheter will be passed into your bladder, and the urine in the bladder will be removed. BCG is then inserted into your bladder via the catheter, which is then removed. You will be advised to retain the BCG in your bladder for two hours. Before leaving the ward you will be asked to pass urine into the toilet.

What precautions should you take?

Drink plenty of fluids after your treatment.

Once outside your body the fluid can be unsafe for you or others if there is direct contact with the fluid. Therefore for **six hours** after treatment, follow these guidelines:

- Be sure you sit down to pass urine to avoid splashing,
- Drink plenty of fluids,
- Flush the toilet twice after passing your urine (alternatively, add a cup of bleach to the toilet bowl after each time that you urinate),
- Wash your genital area and hands with soap and water each time you pass urine

The effects of BCG on sperm and on the baby during pregnancy are unknown. It is recommended that women use birth control when receiving BCG treatment. Men should use condoms when receiving treatment.

Are there any side effects to the treatment?

Some side effects can occur although they are usually temporary and manageable. Reactions usually occur 3-4 hours after treatment and may last a day or more. Side effects may worsen with each treatment. The most common side effects include:

- Frequent urination
- Discomfort or burning sensation when urinating
- Traces of blood or debris in the urine
- Flu-like symptoms (headache, muscle and joint aches).

Serious side effects of BCG can occur, although they are rare. These include: infection of the lung, infection of the liver, infection of the blood, infection of the prostate, or shrinkage of the bladder.

A low-grade fever can occur. If you have a temperature less than 38.5 degrees Celcius, take Tylenol (acetaminophen). **If you have a temperature greater than 38.5 degrees Celcius for more than 24 hours or any fever greater than 39.5 degrees Celsius, contact your urologist or head directly to the Emergency Room for medical attention.** You may require antibiotic treatment. Rarely, reactions causing serious illness and even death have been reported, so do not delay seeking medical attention.

See your doctor during office hours as soon as possible if you have signs of liver problems (yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools), flu-like symptoms that last more than 2-3 days, or severe pain when passing urine.

What follow up will I require?

After your treatment is completed, your urologists will want to perform a cystoscopy (camera in the bladder) to assess your response to treatment. This will usually occur between six weeks and three months after your complete your BCG treatment. Please contact me upon completion of your BCG treatment to arrange your cystoscopy.