

## **BCG treatment for Superficial Bladder Cancer**

**BCG (Bacillus Calmette Guerin)** is commonly used to treat superficial bladder cancer. This leaflet answers questions many people ask about the treatment.

### **What is BCG?**

BCG is a live vaccine normally used to inoculate against TB. When it is put into the bladder it causes an inflammatory reaction to occur there. This inflammation seems to destroy the cancerous cells, although it is not yet clear exactly how it does this. However, BCG has been used very successfully worldwide to treat and prevent the recurrence of superficial bladder cancer.

### **Is there anything I need to do before treatment?**

***You should not drink too much fluid for 8 hours before the treatment.*** One glass of water, tea/coffee may be taken with breakfast. If you drink as little as possible the kidneys will produce less urine and thus prevent the dilution of the BCG when it is in your bladder. It will also make it easier for you to retain the treatment in the bladder for the necessary amount of time.

If you normally take water tablets (diuretics) take them after your BCG session rather than first thing in the morning of your treatment days.

**You may eat as normal.**

***If you have problems with incontinence*** (urine leakage) please inform the nurse before starting treatment.

### **Where do I come for treatment?**

You will be asked to come to the Ambulatory Treatment Centre. You will be sent an appointment time. The medical team will decide your treatment timetable.

### **How long does the treatment take?**

You will be in the hospital for about 2½ hours for your first treatment, and then approximately ½ hr for subsequent treatments. We try hard to keep to your appointment time, but sometimes unavoidable delays do occur. You should feel well enough to go home alone after the treatment, however, if you are elderly or infirm, please arrange for a relative or friend to collect you.

### **What will happen when I arrive?**

You will be shown to a seat in the waiting area and the Nurse Specialist will be informed of your arrival.

Prior to your treatment you will be asked to empty your bladder and provide a urine specimen. If you have visible blood in your urine or a suspected infection, your treatment may be postponed until the following week.

### **How is the treatment given?**

You will be shown into a treatment room where a catheter tube is passed into the bladder. The BCG, which is in 50mls (1½ oz) of fluid, is then passed via the catheter into the bladder. The catheter is then removed. On your first visit you will be shown into the waiting area.

You are asked not to pass urine for the next 2 hours. It is during this time that the treatment is working to destroy the cancerous cells or prevent them from recurring. Please bring something with you that will help pass the time e.g: books, magazines. You may leave the clinic but must return to pass urine **(DO NOT USE ANY OTHER TOILETS IN THE HOSPITAL).**

For your subsequent treatments you will be able to leave the hospital directly after the BCG instillation and travel home. After 2 hours you can pass water into your home toilet.

### **What to do after each treatment**

When the 2 hours are finished (or sooner if you are unable to hold on that long), use the toilet to pass urine (men should sit rather than stand to urinate, to avoid splashing the skin).

Do not flush the toilet but put strong household bleach around the toilet bowl; this is because BCG is a live vaccine. You should leave the bleach in the toilet for 15 minutes before flushing.

### **For the following 4 hours after passing urine you need to:**

1. Men need to sit rather than stand to urinate (to prevent splashing). If splashing occurs wash the skin with soap and water.
2. After passing urine, pour 2 cups of undiluted liquid household bleach into the toilet and let it stand for 15 minutes before flushing.
3. Drink 2½ to 3 litres (5-6 pints) of fluids for the first 24 hours after the treatment, to flush any remaining drug out of the bladder. This will also help prevent bladder irritability.
4. If sexually active, engage in protective intercourse (i.e. with a condom), or delay intercourse for the treatment course.
5. If you use continence pads, when changing pads, carefully pour ½ cup of household bleach onto pad and dispose of in the usual way. Wash skin and dry thoroughly.

### **Are there any possible side effects?**

- Because the drug goes directly into the bladder, the common side effects are on the bladder itself.
- You will not lose your hair (this is a common worry).
- You may have increased frequency and urgency to pass urine.
- You may also experience a small amount of bleeding and discomfort when passing urine. Drinking plenty of fluids will help.

If any of these symptoms persist for more than 24 hours, or you are passing offensive smelling urine you should contact your GP or Specialist Nurse because you may have a water infection.

*Other less common side effects are:*

Fever and chills	Skin rash
Joint pain	Fatigue
Nausea and vomiting	Cough

Again, if any of these symptoms persist for more than 24 hours you should contact your GP or Specialist Nurse.

### **What drugs may interfere with the treatment?**

Drugs and therapy that suppress your immune system, including radiation, can interfere with how well the malignant cells in the bladder respond to the treatment and may increase the risk of bone and other infections. That is why it is important to make sure the consultant or the specialist nurses are aware of all drugs you are taking before beginning your treatment.

## **Please bring a list of medication with you.**

We hope these details are of help to you.

If you have any worries or queries, do not hesitate to contact your Consultant

**Telephone: 020 3177751**  
**Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm**