

BCG Bladder Therapy



UHN

Information for Patients

TGH Cystoscopy Clinic

What is BCG Bladder therapy?

You have been given this pamphlet to help you understand the therapy that has been chosen for your superficial bladder cancer.

The doctor has decided that “Bacillus Calmette-Guerin” (bah-sil-us kal-met ger-ehn) or “BCG” therapy is right for you.

- BCG is a type of immunotherapy and is NOT chemotherapy (a therapy for many other types of cancer).
- Immunotherapy helps your body produce a natural defence against recurring bladder tumours by creating an inflammatory response inside your bladder.

How will the BCG be given to me?

You will get your BCG therapy in the Cystoscopy Unit by a Registered Nurse.

- Your nurse will place a small catheter into your bladder through your urethra to empty any urine.
- Your nurse will then inject 50ml of BCG solution through the catheter into your bladder. This is called an **instillation**.
- Once the catheter is removed, you will be asked to hold the BCG solution in your bladder for 2 hours. We know that this may be difficult for some patients, so try to hold it as long as possible (**but do not hold it longer than 2 hours**).
- You can go home right after the instillation.

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Author: Karen Thomas

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University Health Network
Toronto General Hospital Toronto Western Hospital Princess Margaret Hospital

How often will I need to have BCG bladder therapy?

- You will begin with one bladder instillation of BCG once a week for **6 weeks**.
- Your urologist may order additional maintenance BCG therapy, which means you would receive one bladder instillation of BCG once a week for **3 weeks**.
- There is a rest period of about 2 to 3 months in between each group of BCG instillations.
- You will have a cystoscopy about 6 weeks following each completed course of therapy so the doctor can check your bladder for any new tumours.

What should I do to get ready for my BCG therapy?

Do not drink fluids for at least 4 hours before your therapy so that your bladder will not be full. You may take your regular medications with a sip of water if needed. You can still sip enough fluids to keep your mouth moist, and you may also eat that morning. Do not take any diuretic medications (water pills) until 4 hours after receiving your BCG therapy.

On the morning of each of your therapy treatments:

- **You must phone the Cystoscopy Department at 416-340-3882 and talk to the nurse.**
- The nurse will ask you a few questions to make sure that your therapy is able to go ahead. We call this “screening”.
- We use screening for a number of reasons:
 1. We can order your medication and have it ready for you when you arrive.
 2. The other reason is that if you have had any signs of infection or a reaction from your last treatment, your therapy may be postponed. We will be able to tell from your phone-in screening (so you will not have to come into the hospital that day).

**If you do not phone in for your screening,
your therapy will be delayed.**

What will happen after my therapy?

Since the BCG is made from a diluted strain of the Tuberculosis (TB) bacillus (an infectious bacteria), you will need to treat your urine at home after you urinate. This is to make sure no one, including you, will become ill from the bacteria.

What you will need to treat your urine:

To treat your urine, **you will need 1 large (5.3 litre) container of household bleach.**

Steps to treat your urine:

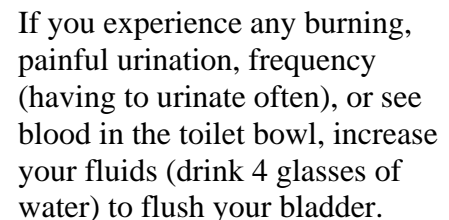
1. Men should sit when urinating so the urine does not splash upwards and out of the toilet bowl.
2. After urinating, you need to pour 2 cups of household bleach into the toilet with the urine and let it sit for 15 minutes.
3. After 15 minutes, return to the toilet and flush the contents (with the toilet lid down to prevent any splashing outside of the bowl).
4. You must repeat this each time you urinate for 6 hours following the instillation of BCG.
5. Make sure to wash your hands with soap and water after each time you have been to the bathroom.
6. If you spill urine on the floor, toilet seat or another surface, you will need to clean this area well. Wear gloves to wipe up the urine with toilet tissue. Then, using clean toilet tissue, wipe the surface with a dilution of bleach (mix about 1 ounce of bleach in 1 cup of water). Allow the area to dry. Flush the tissue down the toilet.
7. Please try to avoid urinating in a public washroom for 6 hours following the therapy. If you do need to urinate in a public washroom, please make sure you sit to urinate (to avoid any splashing outside the bowl) and to flush the toilet twice.

What are the possible side effects from BCG therapy?

Most patients handle BCG therapy without any major problems. You may, however, have some side effects that can occur a few hours after receiving the BCG medication and may last 1 to 2 days.

The most common side effects include:

- Flu-like symptoms:
 - low grade fever (less than 38.5°C)
 - chills
 - headaches
 - muscle aches
 - joint pain
- Frequent or painful urination
- Traces of blood in the urine
- Urination at night
- Fatigue or feeling very tired



If you experience any burning, painful urination, frequency (having to urinate often), or see blood in the toilet bowl, increase your fluids (drink 4 glasses of water) to flush your bladder.

These symptoms usually last less than 48 hours. If you wish, you may take plain Tylenol® to make yourself feel more comfortable. You do not need a prescription for this medication, but you should talk to your pharmacist to check if Tylenol® is right for you.

If you have any of these symptoms (for example, you have a rash, have a fever greater than 38.5°C, have blood in your urine, have frequency, or have burning on urination) for more than 48 hours, please call your urologist.

Go to your nearest Emergency room right away if you have any of these signs soon after your therapy including:

- **Dizziness**
- **A fast heart beat**
- **Swelling of your face**
- **Breathing problems**

Can I have sex after my BCG therapy?

It is suggested that you do not have sexual intercourse for 24 hours after having BCG therapy.

- Males should wear a condom while having intercourse for 1 week after each therapy.
- Females should ask their partner to wear a condom for 1 week after each therapy.

Who should I talk to if I have questions about BCG Bladder therapy?

Please call your urologist if you have any further questions about BCG therapy.

Also, do not have any dental work, vaccinations or start any new medications without talking with your doctor first.

References:

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http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A555CAA1-E723-43E8-A88D-20FAB127B9E2/30158/BCGhandout_bladder_1Sept08.pdf