

# BCG Bladder Therapy

## Information for patients

### Where to find us:



TGH Cystoscopy Clinic  
2NU (Room 291)  
Toronto General Hospital  
Phone: 416 340 3882

Your doctor has decided that BCG bladder therapy is the best therapy for your bladder cancer.

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- What it is
- How to prepare for it
- What to expect during therapy
- What to do when you get home



## What is BCG bladder therapy?

BCG stands for “Bacillus Calmett-Guerin” (bah-sil-us kal-met ger-ehn).

BCG bladder therapy is a type of immunotherapy. BCG is **not** a type of chemotherapy.

Immunotherapy helps your body defend itself from bladder tumours that keep coming back. It makes your bladder become inflamed, or swollen. This helps to protect your bladder.

## How will I get BCG therapy?

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

- Your nurse places a small catheter (tube) into your bladder through your urethra. This helps to empty any urine.
- Your nurse then puts a small amount of BCG solution into your bladder, using the catheter. This is called an instillation.
- The nurse removes the catheter. You then hold the BCG solution in your bladder for 2 hours. This may be hard for some patients. Try to hold it as long as possible (but not longer than 2 hours).
- You can go home right after the instillation.

**Important:** If you have TB, you are being treated for TB, or you are taking TB medications, please inform the Cystoscopy Clinic Nurse and your urologist.

## How often will I need to have BCG bladder therapy?

Your urologist will decide how many rounds of therapy you will need.

You will have a test called a cystoscopy about 6 weeks after each round of therapy. This test will check your bladder for any new tumours.

## Schedule of BCG bladder therapy

First round of therapy	→	Once a week for 6 weeks
Rest period	→	2 to 3 months
Maintenance therapy (if needed)	→	Once a week for 3 weeks. You may have this again, as often as needed. There will be a rest period after each treatment.

## What should I do to get ready?

### On the day before your therapy:

1. Phone the Cystoscopy Department at 416 340 3882 for screening.  
We will ask you a few questions to make sure your therapy can go ahead.

We do this screening to:

- Order your medicine and have it ready when you arrive.
- Know if you have had any signs of infection, or a reaction from your last treatment. If this happens, we may need to change your therapy to another time.

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

2. Do not drink for at least 4 hours before your therapy. This is to make sure your bladder is not full. To keep your mouth moist, you can sip a little liquid. You can eat that morning.
3. Do not take any diuretic medicine (water pills) before your therapy. You can take diuretic medicine 4 hours after your BCG therapy. You can take other medicines before therapy with a sip of water, if needed.

## Things you need to do after your therapy

You need to treat your urine at home after you urinate. This is important because BCG is made from bacteria that can infect you or other people. It is made from a diluted strain of Tuberculosis (TB).

Treating your urine will make sure that no one gets sick from the bacteria.



**To put as little of the toxic medications into the environment as possible, you must treat your urine differently.**

Protect the environment by following the steps below:

- 1. Treat your urine each time you go to the bathroom. You will need to do this for 6 hours after your treatment.**
2. Have 1 large bottle of household bleach (5.3 litres).
3. After you urinate, pour 2 cups of household bleach into the toilet with the urine. Let it sit for 15 minutes.
4. Men should sit when they urinate. This helps to make sure the urine does not splash up and out of the toilet bowl.
5. After 15 minutes, close the toilet lid. Then flush the toilet. Make sure the toilet lid is down to stop any splashes outside of the bowl.
6. Wash your hands with soap and water after you go to the bathroom.

## What if I spill urine?

If you spill urine on the floor, toilet seat or other area, you will need to clean it well with **bleach mixture**.

- Mix about 2 tablespoons of bleach in 1 cup of water.
- Flush the tissue down the toilet.
- Allow the area to dry.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

## **What side effects could I have?**

Most patients do not have any major problems, but you may have some side effects. These can start a few hours after treatment and may last 1 to 2 days.

### **The most common side effects are:**

- you feel like you have the flu:
  - low fever (less than 38.5 °C)
  - chills
  - headaches
  - muscle aches or joint pain
- you have to urinate often, or pain when you urinate
- traces of blood in the urine
- urinating at night
- feeling very tired

These side effects usually last less than 2 days.

If you feel any burning or pain, have to urinate often, or see blood in the toilet bowl, drink about 4 glasses of water. This will help to flush your bladder.

If you wish, you can take plain Tylenol to feel more comfortable. Talk to your pharmacist to check if Tylenol is right for you.



**Call your urologist if you have any of these symptoms for more than 48 hours:**

- a rash
- a fever greater than 38.5 °C
- blood in your urine
- you have to urinate often
- have a burning feeling when you urinate



**Go to your nearest emergency department right away if you have any of these signs soon after your therapy:**

- dizziness
- a fast heart beat
- swelling of your face
- breathing problems

## **Can I have sex after my BCG therapy?**

Do not have sexual intercourse for 24 hours after having BCG therapy.

For 1 week after each therapy:

- wear a condom while having sex
- ask your partner to wear a condom

## What else do I need to know?

Talk to your doctor before you:

- have any dental work
- have any vaccinations
- start taking any new medicine

## Who should I talk to if I have questions?

Call your urologist if you have any more questions about BCG therapy.



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