

Patient and Carer Information

INTRAVESICAL IMMUNOTHERAPY

Your treatment guide to BCG Instillation

What is Intravesical Immunotherapy?

Non- invasive bladder cancers are an early form of cancer but without treatment, many will recur after initial removal. Intravesical immunotherapy is given to people who have very early bladder cancer known as carcinoma in situ (CIS) or who have high grade non-invasive bladder cancer.

The aim of intravesical immunotherapy is to completely treat the cancer or, at least reduce the likelihood of it developing into a more aggressive tumour by promoting an immune response which helps your own body fight the disease.

The drug given into the bladder is named BCG. This leaflet will tell you briefly what you can expect to happen when you attend for your treatments.

Where is treatment given?

Your treatment will be given in a private area on the Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre. You can expect to be here for no longer than 3 hours. Treatment is initially given weekly for 6 weeks followed by a check cystoscopy (look in your bladder) a month or so later. If the BCG treatment is working well, further 3 weekly treatments will be given known as maintenance therapy for up to a year. You will have a break between treatments and a check cystoscopy.

What does it involve?

You will be asked to remove your lower garments and lie on a couch. A small catheter will be passed into your bladder with the help of some anaesthetic gel.

The BCG is then introduced into your bladder through the catheter. The catheter will then be removed and you will be asked to hold the drug for 2 hours.

After 2 hours you can empty your bladder into the toilet. You are advised to wash your hands and genital area immediately afterwards.

BCG is a live vaccine and must be handled with care. BCG remains in your urine for a time, so when you go home, for the next 6 hours, we advise that you please sit down when you pass urine and disinfect your toilet after each time with bleach. This should be left in the bowl for 15 minutes before you flush. No one else should use the toilet until it has been properly disinfected.

Are there any side effects?

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There are some side effects, which vary from person to person. You will probably not have all these effects, but they include flu-like symptoms lasting about 24 hours, pain on passing urine, frequency and urgency to pass urine and sometimes a small amount of blood in the urine. Infections and skin rashes can be treated and should be reported to your doctor and to the nursing staff at your next visit.

BCG can be more difficult to tolerate than bladder chemotherapy. A few patients find they are very sensitive to BCG and their side effects may be disruptive to everyday life. Please, if this happens to you, discuss it with the nurses on the Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre or with your specialist nurse.

If you need antibiotics whilst having BCG treatment, it is important that your GP is aware that you are having this therapy as some antibiotics can affect the treatment.

How can you help yourself?

You may feel generally unwell on the evening of your treatment and suffer from flu-like symptoms. Two paracetamol will help and you should drink plenty of fluids. You will normally feel fine by the next day. Should these symptoms last longer than 48 hours, please contact us.

If you have any problems or queries related to your intravesical immunotherapy, please ring either:

- Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre 01423 557301 (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm)
- The Macmillan Urology Nurse Specialist on 01423 553318
- Your GP

Should you wish to read more about superficial bladder cancer and its treatment, Macmillan Cancer Support's booklet 'Understanding Non-Invasive Bladder Cancer' is a good place to start. This can be obtained, free of charge by ringing 0808 808 00 00.

Macmillan Cancer Support can also be accessed on line. Their web site is www.macmillan.org.uk

If you or your family (with your approval) would like to discuss your treatment further or have any questions, please contact: Alison Marchant or Helen Sunderland, Macmillan Urology Nurse Specialists on 01423 553318 or 01423 553317

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.