



# BCG treatment for bladder cancer

BCG treatments are used to reduce the risk of a bladder tumour returning.

## What is BCG treatment?

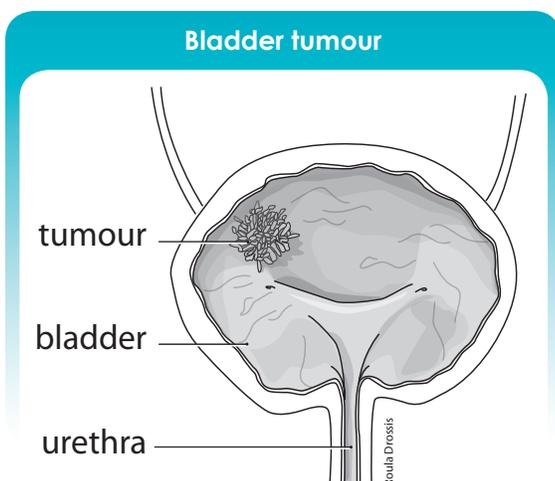
- When cancer was discovered in the lining of your bladder, it was treated either by removing (cauterizing) harmful tissue or by using a tool passed through your urethra to scrape away harmful tissue (See diagram Bladder tumour).
- Even though your urologist tries to get all of the cancer, sometimes very tiny pieces are left that can grow into new tumours.
- BCG (Bacillus Calmette Guerin: bacteria named after the inventors) is a live vaccine that is put directly on the bladder cancer.
- It causes an action in the bladder that works to kill the cancer cells and stop them from coming back.
- In the beginning, BCG (a type of immunotherapy) was a vaccine created to prevent tuberculosis.
- Many thousands of men and women have successfully controlled their bladder cancer in the early stages with BCG treatments.

## What should I know about this treatment?

- Usually, treatment will start a few weeks after your surgery.
- BCG treatments will be done in a clinic or hospital once a week for six weeks.
- You could be treated for several months and even then, might need maintenance treatments for several years.

## What happens before BCG treatment?

- BCG works best when it is full strength in the bladder and not watered down by urine.
- To do this, limit your liquids to 250 ml (1 cup) or less in the four hours before each treatment.
- If you take diuretics ("water pills"), take them two hours AFTER your treatment rather than before. They increase the urine that you produce and can also water down BCG.
- It is important to let your healthcare provider know if:
  - you are pregnant
  - your immune system is weakened by illness or medication, including steroids (immunosuppressed).
  - you have a bladder infection (You could tell if you have symptoms such as urinating more often or urgently, or your urine burns or is cloudy and "stinks")
  - you have had a heart valve replacement.
  - you have recently seen blood in your urine.



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## What happens during BCG treatment?

- A narrow tube (called a catheter) is passed through the urethra into the bladder.
- After draining off any urine, a small amount of BCG solution is put into the bladder and then the catheter is taken out.
- If there is a problem with putting in the catheter, you may need to wait one week before it is tried again.
- Complications are possible when BCG is put into your blood or body tissues. Ask your urologist about those if you are concerned.

## What happens right after BCG treatment?

- BCG must be kept on the lining of the bladder for it to work properly against the cancer.
- To make sure this happens, you might need to lie down and turn onto your front, back and side every 15 minutes for one hour.
- You will be told when you can go home.

## What do I need to do after BCG treatment?

- After treatment, it is best to wait for about two hours before urinating.
- After the two hours, when you need to urinate, sit down to avoid splashing BCG.
- As a live vaccine, BCG can be harmful if it gets onto your skin.
- Once the bladder is empty, do not flush the toilet right away.
- BCG must be neutralized by adding bleach (that you have around the house) to the urine in the toilet.

### For the first 6 hours after BCG treatment, every time you urinate:

Pour 250 ml-500 ml (1-2 cups) of household bleach into the toilet

Close the lid and let the bleach sit in the toilet for 15-20 minutes before flushing

The mixture of urine and bleach can give off strong fumes

It is important that you can air out your washroom because of these fumes.

Wash your hands and genitals very carefully with soap and water.

Avoid getting urine on your skin.

If BCG has touched your skin, completely wash the area with soap and water

Splashes of urine needs to be wiped up using a strong disinfectant or bleach

- Ask your doctor if you have specific questions around returning to sexual activity.

## What happens at the end of BCG treatment?

- After your BCG treatment, you will be re-examined to see how well it worked.
  - Samples of your urine may be studied for cancer cells (called urine cytology)
  - A scope (like a small camera: cystoscopy) will be passed through your urethra to look at your bladder.
- Depending on the findings, you may have more BCG treatments.
- Sometimes you may extra treatments including surgery to control your cancer.

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## When should I get medical help?

- Call your doctor or nurse if:
- You see a lot of blood in your urine.
- Your urine is very bloody. It is normal to have a small amount of blood in your urine after treatment, but this should clear up within three days.
- You have chills and a fever over 38.5°C (101°F).
- You have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea that lasts for a long time.
- You feel new pain in your joints that lasts for more than three days after your BCG treatment.
- You notice a skin rash or a new cough.

## Your BCG treatments are scheduled to begin on:

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

at \_\_\_\_\_ (time)

at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (location)

or

You will be contacted soon with the time, date and location of your BCG treatments.

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