

# BCG

## Why do I need this done?

If your doctor has arranged for you to have this procedure, this leaflet gives you the basic facts on what is going to happen to you and your body, in an easy to understand way. Intravesical immunotherapy or “**BCG**” is a procedure that occurs after a biopsy or surgery for bladder cancer. It involves exposing the bladder lining to BCG (a live attenuated bacteria) which causes a reaction from your immune system against any remaining bladder cancer cells. This can reduce the risk of bladder cancer returning significantly.

## What to expect before the procedure

BCG therapy is typically performed as an outpatient procedure and you will be awake. Prior to the procedure it is important you follow your surgeon/hospital's instructions which may include additional investigations, medication changes and/or a short course of antibiotics. You should contact your treating team if you have symptoms of urine infection prior to the procedure. To prevent dilution of the BCG preparation, you will usually be asked to limit your fluid consumption in the hours before your procedure.

## What to expect during the procedure

After cleaning the genital area with antiseptic solution, numbing gel is applied to your pee hole (the urethra). A catheter (plastic tube) is then inserted into the bladder via the urethra to enable delivery of BCG solution into the bladder. The catheter is then removed and you will be asked to try and not pass urine for the next two hours. Your hospital may allow you to leave straight after the procedure and pass urine at home.

## What to expect after the procedure

It is normal to experience some side effects up to 3 days after your BCG therapy:

- Painful and/or frequent urination
- Small amount of blood in urine
- Flu-like symptoms
- Headache, low-grade fever, poor appetite, low energy, shivers

You will be given specific safety instructions to follow for the next couple of days at home. It is advisable to avoid sexual intercourse for at least 24 hours after each treatment. BCG can make you feel tired and under the weather. Take it easy for a couple of days. If you are experiencing painful urination, over the counter medication such as Ural can help. Drink plenty of water. It is normal for there to be a small amount of blood in your urine for 2-3 days after the procedure.

## You might also experience:

COMMON	OCCASIONAL	RARE
Minor side effects as mentioned above Nausea Discomfort	Urine infection requiring antibiotics Inflammation that can affect other parts of the body (joints, liver, eyes) Urethral scarring	Persistent or severe bladder pain Generalised and serious infection from BCG requiring hospitalisation and strong antibiotics

Typically, you will receive BCG therapy once a week for 6 weeks, which is known as the ‘induction’ phase. After this time many people move on to a ‘maintenance’ phase where you receive further doses at a frequency that is right for you. Bladder cancer can recur during or after BCG treatment, so regular follow-up bladder examinations (cystoscopies) are an important part of your follow-up.

