Frequently asked questions

Q. Why am I getting BCG treatment?
A. BCG treatments are used for patients with bladder cancer. They are used as a therapy for and prevention against recurrent tumors in patients with non-invasive bladder cancer.

Q. Can BCG treatment cause infection?
A. The risk of getting a serious infection from the BCG treatment is 1%. However, the risk of a simple urinary infection is 10-20%.

Q. What are the risks of BCG treatment?
A. Risks include: infection, burning with urination, blood in urine, and allergic reaction.

Q. Will I have difficulty holding my bladder?
A. No—however, if you normally have difficulty holding your bladder before you begin treatment, inform your provider.

Q. What if I can't hold my bladder before or after treatment?
A. We can leave a catheter in during treatment to keep the medicine in your bladder for your appointment.
What is BCG treatment?

BCG is a weakened form of a bacteria that has been shown to decrease the recurrence of bladder cancer. Medication containing BCG is used as a therapy for the prevention of recurrent tumors in patients with non-invasive bladder cancer.

BCG medication is administered through a catheter which is inserted in your urethra and passed into the bladder.

Preparing for BCG treatment

- It is important to limit your fluid intake 4 hours before your appointment.
- You may be asked to provide a urine sample at the time of your appointment.
- If you think you have a bladder infection or have blood in your urine before your BCG treatment, please contact your doctor, as a serious infection could occur during treatment.

During BCG treatment

First, a catheter is inserted into the urethra. You may feel mild discomfort. Then, the BCG medication is put into the catheter and flows into the bladder. You will feel a cool sensation when the BCG flows into the bladder.

The BCG bacteria are only active for 6 hours. For this reason, you must follow specific instructions for urination after each treatment. You have to urinate. However, in most cases, the exam does not cause discomfort.

After BCG treatment

Refrain from urinating after BCG treatment for up to 2 hours to keep the BCG medication in your bladder as long as possible.

For 6 hours after each BCG treatment you must follow these instructions:

- Avoid using a public restroom at this time.
- While you urinate, sit down on the toilet to avoid splashing.
- After urinating, pour 2 cups of household bleach into the toilet, close the lid, and wait 15 minutes before flushing.
- Wipe down both sides of the lid and toilet seat with a bleach-soaked cloth and allow to dry. Throw the cloth away and use a new cloth for each urination.
- Wash your hands and genital area with soap and water after each urination.

It is also important to remember to:

- Drink plenty of water or other fluids for at least 6 hours after each treatment.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods for the first 2 days after your treatment.
- Remind all family and friends who may come in contact with your urine to wash their hands with soap and water.
- Avoid intercourse and oral sex for 2-3 days after each treatment. We recommend using condoms during the course of BCG treatment and for 1-2 weeks after your treatments are completed.

Post procedure symptoms

These symptoms are normal for up to 48 hours after your procedure:

- Small amount of blood in your urine
- Need to urinate very often
- Pain or burning when passing urine
- Discomfort in the genital area where the catheter was inserted
- Tiredness
- Flu-like symptoms
- Joint or muscle aches

These symptoms are abnormal—please call the Urology clinic if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Any of the above symptoms for more than 48 hours
- You are unable to pass urine for 6 hours or longer
- Lower stomach pain or bladder spasms get worse after 48 hours
- Fever of 101°F or higher
- Nausea and/or vomiting