

# BCG

### ► What is **BCG**?

BCG (Bacille Calmette-Guerin) is a weak form of tuberculosis bacteria. It stimulates the body's immune system attack cancer cells. The initial BCG treatment is inserted directly into the bladder as a topical rinse. It does not enter your bloodstream. BCG is a common treatment for bladder cancer that has not invaded the muscle wall of the bladder. It is often used for patients who have high-grade tumors.

### ► What happens during **BCG** treatment?

BCG is a type of *intravesical immunotherapy*. Your health care provider puts a liquid containing the BCG directly into the bladder using a catheter. This is called "instillation." Medicines that are given this way affect the cells lining the inside of the bladder. There is little to no effect on cells in other parts of the body. Immunotherapy causes the body's immune system to attack the cancer cells.

- BCG remains in your bladder for up to two hours
- BCG treatment is usually given once a week for six weeks
- Additional series of BCG treatments referred to as "maintenance BCG," may be recommended



### ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

#### » Why is BCG treatment a good option for me?

- What is the success rate of BCG for my age, tumor type, and stage?
- When might I know that the treatment is working?

#### » What's involved in having this treatment?

- How many treatments will I have and how often?
- Where will I get the treatment? Will I stay there for the whole treatment or can I go home for the time I hold the BCG in my bladder?
- Who can I talk to if I have questions or need help?

#### » What is your experience with BCG treatment?

#### » What options do I have if BCG does not work?

Always consider  
a 2nd Opinion



## TERMS TO KNOW

- **Catheter:** A flexible tube inserted through a narrow opening into a body cavity, particularly the bladder.
- **Immunotherapy:** The prevention or treatment of disease with substances that stimulate the immune response.
- **Intravesical:** Within a bladder, especially the urinary bladder.
- **TURBT:** A transurethral resection of the bladder tumor (TURBT) is a surgical procedure used to diagnose, stage, and treat visible bladder cancer tumors.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Advice from bladder cancer patients who have experience with BCG

### BEFORE BCG TREATMENT

- If you grew up outside of the United States it is possible you received BCG as a vaccine. Let your healthcare team know before starting BCG treatments.
- Try to schedule your appointment at a day and time that is convenient for you.
- Bring music or books to distract you during the time you must hold the BCG in your bladder.
- BCG will not be given until your bladder has healed from any **TURBT** procedures. This reduces the risk of BCG getting into your blood stream.
- Be prepared to provide a urine sample before your BCG treatment. If this urine sample shows signs of infection, you will not be treated with BCG until the infection clears up.
- You might be asked not to eat or drink for a period of time before the treatment.
- Bring a friend or family member to keep you company and to take notes on what the doctor tells you.

### DURING BCG TREATMENT

- A **catheter** instills the liquid drug into your bladder.
- Some doctors ask patients to lie down and rotate around so that the drug coats the entire bladder.
- Medications are available to help you relax during the treatment.

### AFTER BCG TREATMENT

- Tell your medical team if you experience any side effects. BCG can cause side effects, such as:

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| - flu-like symptoms | - the urge to urinate                   |
| - fever             | - painful urination                     |
| - chills            | - symptoms of a urinary tract infection |
| - fatigue           | - blood or clots in your urine          |

- Ask about prescription or over-the-counter therapies, such as medications, creams, or heating pads that can help with possible side effects.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to give you instructions about safety procedures (such as using bleach in your toilet) to follow when you urinate after BCG treatment.
- Drink plenty of water and other non-caffeinated liquids after each treatment.
- Plan to rest for the day following your BCG treatment.
- Call your medical team if you have questions or something seems wrong.

### NEXT STEPS:

- You will still need regular cystoscopies to make sure the tumors have not recurred.
- After the initial cycle of BCG, your doctor might recommend maintenance cycles of BCG.
- It can be helpful to talk to someone who has experienced BCG. Call the BCAN Survivor 2 Survivor program to connect with a volunteer who knows about having BCG treatment.  
**Dial 888-901-BCAN.**

## The Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network (BCAN)

BCAN's mission is to increase public awareness about bladder cancer, advance bladder cancer research, and provide educational and support services for the bladder cancer community.



[www.bcan.org](http://www.bcan.org)



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