

IMMUNOTHERAPY

What is Systemic Cancer Immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is a type of treatment for cancer that works by helping your immune system find and attack cancer cells. Normally, the immune system works to protect your body from harmful things like germs. But cancer cells can hide from the immune system. Immunotherapy helps your immune system recognize and attack these cancer cells.

Some people with bladder cancer may receive a type of immunotherapy called BCG that is placed directly inside the bladder. For cases where bladder cancer has spread to other parts of the body, your oncologist may offer systemic immunotherapy.

How Is Systemic Immunotherapy Given?

Systemic immunotherapy is given through an intravenous (IV) infusion, which means the medicine is delivered directly into a vein, usually in your arm, using a small needle. This treatment is done in a clinic or hospital where healthcare professionals will monitor you during the process. Once the medicine enters your bloodstream, it travels throughout your body, helping your immune system find and attack cancer cells wherever they may be.

The infusion may take some time, and your doctor will let you know how often you will need the treatment and how long each session will last. It's important to share any concerns or changes you notice during treatment with your healthcare team so they can help manage any side effects.

ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

- *What stage is my bladder cancer?*
- *Is immunotherapy right for me?*
- *How many treatments will I need, and how often?*
- *What are the benefits and side effects?*
- *Are there any health conditions or medications I should discuss before starting?*

TERMS TO KNOW

- **Oncologist:** A doctor who specializes in preventing, diagnosing and treating cancer.
- **Stage:** The size or spread of cancer in the body, especially if it has spread from where it started to other areas.

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Advice from bladder cancer patients who have experience with immunotherapy treatment

BEFORE IMMUNOTHERAPY

- Work with your doctor to choose a treatment location that's best for you.
- Try to schedule your appointments for the same day of the week and the same time of day to make them easier to remember.
- Set aside enough time in your day for your treatment.
- Make sure to follow any guidelines for eating or drinking before the treatment.
- Bring a friend or family member to keep you company and to take notes on what the doctor tells you.

DURING IMMUNOTHERAPY

- Bring something to do, like a book or music.
- Think positively. Try to relax as much as possible. Don't be afraid to ask questions and tell the doctor or nurse what you are feeling.
- Pack a snack since treatments may last a few hours.
- Other patients going through therapy can be great sources of support and information.

AFTER IMMUNOTHERAPY

- Report any side effects to your doctor right away.
- Stay in touch with your medical team and follow their advice on activity levels.

NEXT STEPS

- Your doctor will monitor your cancer and recommend how long you will have immunotherapy.
- Immunotherapy can be a powerful option in cancer treatment. Your healthcare team can help you understand if it's right for you and guide you through every step.
- It can be helpful to talk to someone who has experienced immunotherapy. Call the BCAN Survivor 2 Survivor program at 888-901-BCAN to connect with a volunteer who knows about having immunotherapy.

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.



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