

## **BCG BLADDER TREATMENT**

### **PATIENT INFORMATION**

After reading this we hope you will have an understanding of the treatment you will be receiving.

#### **What is BCG?**

BCG stands for Bacillus Calmette-Guerin and is commonly used as a vaccine against tuberculosis. Since it is a live vaccine certain precautions must be taken for health and safety reasons.

#### **How does it work?**

BCG activates an immune response, which provokes an attack on malignant cells. Bladder cancer responds well to this form of treatment, which is known as “immunotherapy”.

#### **What happens at each treatment?**

A course consists of six weekly treatments, as follows:

- you will be asked to pass urine prior to the treatment which will be tested for infection, you will not have the treatment if there is any indication that an infection is present;
- external genitalia will be cleaned using a mild antiseptic solution to reduce the risk of introducing infection;
- a lubricated catheter will be passed into the bladder and any residual urine will be drained;
- 50mls of normal saline containing the BCG will be put into your bladder – this is approximately one third of a cup of fluid.

- the catheter will then be removed
- you will be asked to remain in the clinic for two hours - after the first treatment this may not be necessary, your nurse will advise you if there are any special instructions in your own care.

### **After the treatment**

You will be asked to pass urine (including the BCG) in the toilet or suitable urinal. Household bleach will be used to neutralise your urine. It is important for you to continue using bleach in your toilet at home for 6 hours (a teacup is sufficient). Leave this for 20 minutes before flushing. Please wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water when you have finished.

### **Are there any side effects?**

Since BCG works by activating the immune system, side effects are common and usually appear after the second or third treatment. These might be flu-like symptoms such as hot flushes, shivering, high temperature or generally feeling unwell. You will usually feel better after 48 hours, but this can be distressing. You are advised to take paracetamol regularly until the symptoms subside, no other form of treatment is necessary.

In addition, “waterworks” symptoms, including discomfort on passing urine and going frequently, have been reported by as many as 90% of people.

You may also pass debris in your urine, often this is described as “like tea leaves”. This is quite normal.

If you pass fresh blood, it is important to inform the nurse before your next treatment. This may be a reason for discontinuing your treatment.

## **General Information**

It is advisable to reduce your fluid intake on the day of your treatment. If your appointment is in the afternoon, try not to drink anything from mid-morning; for a morning appointment avoid drinks from breakfast time onwards.

If you normally take diuretics (water tablets) in the morning, please do not take them until after your treatment.

Sexual transmission of BCG has never been reported, but it is recommended that you use a condom during sexual intercourse for one week after your BCG therapy.

You will not be given BCG if you are taking corticosteroids or chemotherapeutic agents.

You will not be given BCG if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

You will not be given BCG if you have a urine infection until this has been successfully treated.

You will not be given BCG if you have had a recent difficult catheterisation or if you had a recent operation for a bladder tumour.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your nurse prior to commencing your treatment.