



Patient Education

Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG)

Brand Names

TheraCys® BCG, TICE® BCG. (There may be other names for this medication.)

How is BCG Administered?

Before receiving BCG, you should avoid drinking fluids for 4 hours before treatment. Empty your bladder before treatment begins. Limit how much you drink for 6-10 hours before each treatment, and for 2 hours after each treatment. Otherwise, drink plenty of water.

BCG is given by *intravesicular infusion*. This means that the BCG is placed directly into your bladder through a catheter (a thin, flexible tube) that is inserted into the bladder through your urethra. The catheter is clamped to keep the medication in the bladder. You may be asked to change positions so that the BCG will reach all areas of the bladder. After about 2 hours, (your doctor will set your schedule), the clamp is removed and the BCG will drain out of your bladder. The catheter is removed. Treatments are usually given once a week for 6 weeks, then once a month for 6-12 months.

Why Am I Being Given BCG?

This medication is used to treat bladder cancer.

How Does BCG Work?

BCG is a weakened form of the tuberculosis bacteria. It does not directly kill cancer cells but it is thought to trigger your immune system, which then attacks the cancer cells in your bladder. It may also inhibit future tumor growth.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Receiving BCG?

Tell your doctor if you:

- are allergic to BCG
- have had a recent smallpox vaccination
- have had a positive TB test
- have an immune disorder, fever, any infections, or an area of severe burns on your body
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

This drug may interact with other medications, increasing or decreasing their effectiveness or causing harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements that you are taking.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects I May Experience?

The most common side effects of BCG are bladder problems such as painful, frequent, or urgent urination for 3 -5 days after treatment. Bladder irritation, burning, infection, or trace amounts of blood in the urine are also possible. Other side effects may include:

- Flu symptoms: swollen glands, fever less than 101°F, and joint pain
- Nausea, loss of appetite, and vomiting

Systemic BCG reaction is a rare but potentially serious side effect that can occur within a week of surgery or a traumatic catheterization. **It is very important you notify your doctor immediately if you have:**

- high fever for more than 24 hours or a fever with chills
- confusion
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- shortness of breath

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

Ask your doctor about how to prevent or manage urinary urgency or frequency; bladder spasms or pain; and nausea or vomiting.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- any sign of an allergic reaction: itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing or swallowing, or wheezing.
- any sign of a BCG reaction, listed above

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you experience nausea, vomiting, or fatigue that prevents you from eating or drinking.

What Else Should I Know About BCG?

- For 6 hours after each treatment:
 - ✓ Both men and women should sit down to urinate to avoid splashing the urine.
 - ✓ Any urine voided should be disinfected by pouring 2 cups of bleach into the toilet and then waiting 15 minutes before flushing.
 - ✓ Wash your genitals after urinating to avoid local skin irritation.
- Because BCG uses a live vaccine, you should always use a condom during sexual activity. Talk to your doctor for details.
- Do not get pregnant while receiving BCG.
- You should not have BCG treatment if you are using medicines that weaken your immune system such as prednisone.
- Tell your doctor if you have any changes in your urinary habits after having BCG treatments.
- If you would like more information about BCG, talk to your doctor.