

UROLOGICAL MEDICAL GROUP OF NORTH ORANGE COUNTY

Adult and Pediatric Urology

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BCG THERAPY

Instillation of BCG (bacillus Calmette-Guerin) is an effective treatment for transitional cell carcinoma of the bladder and carcinoma in situ (CIS). BCG is an actual bacteria related to tuberculosis. Somehow it stimulates either an immune response or an inflammation that reduces the risk of subsequent bladder cancers. How it works is not certain. That it does work is certain. It is well tolerated with a few side effects. The therapy is generally well tolerated and the majority of side effects are minor and usually self-limited. Systemic BCG infections may occur and in very rare cases lead to death. It is therefore essential that patients who receive BCG recognize the symptoms of toxicity and promptly call the physician, day or night.

Ninety-one percent of patients have urinary irritation, 2.9 percent have fever over 102, one percent has significant blood in the urine. Systemic infection is something that occurs in only 1.2 percent. The Tice strain, the one we use in this office, has a much lower complication rate than other strains of BCG. This therapy is indicated for patients with multiple tumors, recurrent tumors, and CIS. It is universally considered to be the absolute best treatment for reducing recurrence rates and can reduce the recurrence rates of cancer from 70 percent to 30 percent. There is a weekly instillation for six weeks. Sometimes this continues with monthly treatments or a second course of six treatments. The therapy is individualized and the doctor will determine the best course of action.

Because BCG is a live organism, some care should be exercised in its disposal. After instillation, the patient should refrain from urinating for two hours. The patient should dehydrate themselves a little before the treatment to avoid having to urinate before two hours pass. In other words, do not drink a cup of coffee before receiving a treatment. After urinating the medicine out, one should also pour four ounces of bleach into the toilet and do this each time the patient urinates for twenty-four hours. This is because the patient is voiding live organisms. To our knowledge, there has been no report of another individual acquiring any type of infection because of BCG treatment. It would also be prudent that if one has intercourse during the treatment weeks, that a condom should be utilized by the male partner.

Symptoms and signs of patients with systemic BCG infection include all those listed in Table I.

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