

Chemotherapy in the bladder to treat cancer



You've been diagnosed with bladder cancer. Your doctor is proposing chemotherapy to treat cancer cells in the bladder. This fact sheet describes how this treatment works and the precautions to be taken.

Why do I need this treatment?

This chemotherapy is used to:

- > treat bladder cancer that is not too deep (superficial) (see the fact sheet [Bladder cancer](#)).
- > prevent recurrence or progression of the cancer after bladder surgery.

What does this treatment involve?

It involves destroying cancer cells with a drug. Chemotherapy can be given by different means: by mouth or by injection into the skin or veins, or directly into an organ, such as here, in the bladder.

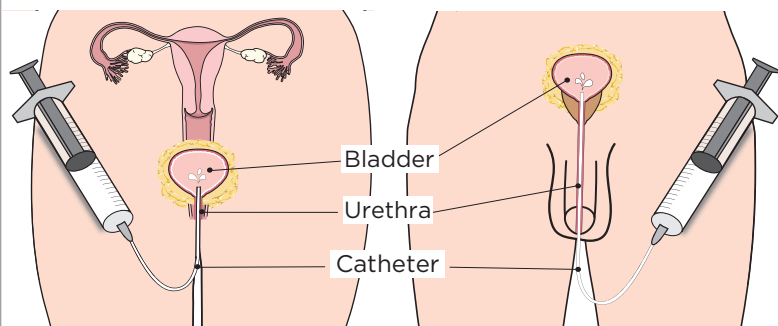
To do this, a small flexible tube (catheter) is inserted into the channel through which urine passes (urethra), all the way into the bladder. This step can be uncomfortable. Talk to your doctor if you're concerned about this. The drug is then injected through this tube ("intravesical injection").

How long are the treatments, and how often are they done?

It all depends on your health status and the type of cancer. Your doctor will tell you how many treatments you'll need and for how long. This can vary greatly from one person to another.

Are there risks associated with this treatment?

Not many. **In very rare cases**, the channel through which urine passes could become narrower, and this could reduce the strength of the urine stream.



The drug is injected into the bladder through a small tube (catheter).

Are there precautions to take BEFORE the treatment?

The drug works best when it's concentrated, so it needs to be prevented from mixing with urine in the bladder. To ensure this:

- > **Don't drink any liquids for 4 hours BEFORE each treatment.**



- > If you're taking any medications that cause urination (**diuretics**), take them **2 hours AFTER your treatment**, and not before. If you're not sure whether you're taking diuretics, ask your pharmacist or doctor.

Also, before each treatment, tell your doctor or nurse if:

- you're pregnant or breastfeeding
- you have symptoms of urinary tract infection (strong urge to urinate, burning sensation when urinating)

If you have a urinary tract infection, your treatment may be delayed until it is treated.

- you have symptoms of a cold, flu, or other infection (throat, teeth...)
- you have other questions that are worrying you

What are the steps of the treatment?

Each treatment takes 15 to 30 minutes. However, you should plan on 2 to 4 hours in all, to cover:

- > the nurse's assessment
- > preparation of the drug
- > the treatment

BEFORE THE TREATMENT

- 1** You'll see your nurse before each treatment. The nurse will ask about your health, your last treatment, and any side effects you may have had. Take the time to discuss these things.
- 2** Your chemotherapy drug will be prepared. You'll have to wait during that time. The wait time can vary from one visit to another.
- 3** A nurse or an attendant will take you to the treatment room, where you'll receive your chemotherapy.

If you have any questions or symptoms, go to the reception desk to see a nurse.

DURING THE TREATMENT

- 1** You lie down.
- 2** The nurse cleans your genitals with a disinfectant. Inform the nurse if you're allergic to iodine.
- 3** The nurse then inserts the small tube (catheter) into the channel through which you urinate. The tube is pushed into the urinary tract, all the way into the bladder.
- 4** The urine in your bladder is emptied through the tube.
- 5** The chemotherapy drug is sent into your bladder through the same tube.
- 6** The nurse removes the tube.
- 7** You can then leave, unless you're told otherwise.

AFTER THE TREATMENT

Don't urinate for 2 hours after the tube is removed.

Then, 2 hours after the tube is removed:

- > Urinate.
- > Drink at least 10 to 12 glasses of liquid per day during the 48 hours after the treatment. This will reduce the side effects (see paragraph below).

For 4 days after EACH treatment

Chemotherapy destroys cancer cells. But it can also destroy normal cells. This is why you need to make sure no one close to you is in contact with your urine or stool.

To ensure this:

- > Urinate while sitting on the toilet to avoid splashing.
- > Each time, after you have urinated, close the lid and **flush twice**.



- > After urinating, wash your genitals with soap and water.
- > Wash your hands before and after using the toilet.
- > If there are splashes, clean the toilet and rim with soap and water.
- > Wash separately any clothing that may have come into contact with urine or stool.
- > If any skin has been in contact with urine, clean it with soap and water.

Are there any precautions to take after the treatments?

To learn about other precautions you should take to protect yourself and your loved ones, read the fact sheet [*Precautions to Take at Home while you're having Chemotherapy*](#).



These precautions should be taken during the 4 days following each chemotherapy treatment.

Are there any side effects?

During the 2 days following the treatment, you might experience:

- difficulty urinating
- bladder pain when urinating
- the need to urinate often and in small amounts, day or night
- blood or whitish or brownish deposits in the urine
- small pimples on your skin
- fatigue

What should I watch for after the treatment?

Call the clinic where you received your treatment if you have any of the following symptoms:

- > Side effects lasting more than 2 days.
- > Chills, or feeling very unwell.
- > Blood in your urine more than 2 days after the treatment. After 2 days, your urine should be clear.
- > You're not able to urinate.

