

## Patient Education:

### Chemotherapy Into the Bladder (Intravesical Chemotherapy)

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After your surgery you may be given chemotherapy directly into your bladder to reduce the risk of your cancer coming back in the bladder. When chemotherapy is given directly into your bladder it is described as **intravesical**.

Chemotherapy works by destroying cancer cells. When it's given into the bladder the drug comes into direct contact with any cancer cells in the lining of the bladder. Because it's given into the bladder and not through a vein (into the bloodstream) you won't get side effects like nausea or hair loss, which people usually associate with chemotherapy.

#### How it's given

If you're having chemotherapy into your bladder you will have a catheter (small tube) placed.

You're usually asked to limit the amount you drink before your treatment. If you drink too much before treatment your bladder may feel uncomfortably full. Drinking less also helps to increase the concentration of the chemotherapy drug in your bladder. If you normally take water tablets (diuretics) take them later in the day after your treatment. Let your doctor know about any other medicines you are taking. You won't be given chemotherapy if you are unwell or have an infection in your urine. Your nurse or doctor will give you more advice about preparing for your treatment.

Your doctor will place a fine tube (catheter) into your bladder. The doctor will then put the chemotherapy drug (a liquid) directly into your bladder through the catheter. There are many drugs that can be used one of the most commonly used is Mitomycin-C . The catheter is then usually removed.

Usually you'll be asked to try to hold your urine for at least an hour after the drug has been put into your bladder. This can be difficult but it's to give the treatment time to work. Sometimes the catheter is left in and clamped to keep the chemotherapy in your bladder until your treatment is over. You can walk around during this time. When the treatment is finished you can go to the toilet or, if you have a catheter, the chemotherapy drug will be drained into a urine bag before the catheter is removed.

**After treatment there are some precautions you'll need to take to protect yourself and others from coming into contact with the chemotherapy drug. These precautions are recommended for 48 hours.**

- **To avoid splashing urine on the toilet seat it might be easier for men to pass urine sitting down on the toilet.**
- **Flush the toilet twice with the lid down.**
- **Wash the skin in your genital area carefully with soap and water after you pass urine. This is to make sure any of the chemotherapy drug that may have splashed onto your skin is then wiped off.**
- **It is important to wash your hands afterwards.**
- **If you are unable to control your urine it is recommended that you wear a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper, or sheet to absorb urine. Change immediately when soiled, and wash skin with soap and water. If you have a caregiver he/she should wear gloves when emptying or changing pads and/or handling urine.**

### **Side effects**

The following side effects are due to inflammation of the bladder lining (cystitis):

- Needing to pass urine often
- Soreness or pain when you pass urine
- Fever
- Muscle aches

These side effects should settle down within a day or two. Drinking lots of fluids will help ease the irritation. You might find it helpful to take mild painkillers. Occasionally some people get a red skin rash on their hands and feet. Let your nurse or doctor know if this happens.

If your side effects don't improve or you have a raised temperature and your urine is smelly (possible signs of a urine infection) get in touch with your doctor straightaway.

### **Contraception**

It isn't advisable to become pregnant or father a child while having chemotherapy drugs to treat bladder cancer, as they may harm the developing fetus. It is important to use effective contraception during your treatment. You can discuss this with your doctor or specialist nurse.

Men should use a condom during sex for the first 48 hours after chemotherapy. If you are a woman having the treatment your partner should use a condom. Using a condom will protect your partner from any of the drug that may be present in semen or vaginal fluid.

Adapted from Macmillan cancer support and the Oncology Nursing Society cancer chemotherapy guidelines.

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Date: 10/28/2010

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SMMC Cancer Committee

Date: 6/2/2010