

Information for Patients

Bladder Instillation of Cytotoxic Medications

What are cytotoxic medications?

Cytotoxic medications are a type of chemotherapy used to treat cancer and some other conditions. They work by damaging or destroying cancer cells, which helps prevent them from growing and spreading.

What is intravesical therapy?

Intravesical therapy is a treatment used for some types of bladder cancer. It may be recommended after a Transurethral Resection of a Bladder Tumour (TURBT) to help reduce the risk of the cancer returning.

During this treatment, a medication is placed directly into the bladder. This is done by inserting a small catheter into the bladder and instilling the cytotoxic medication through the catheter.

Preparation

Your urology team will advise specific instructions for your treatment plan depending on the medication..

It is recommended to reduce fluid intake for four hours prior to treatment.

Receiving treatment

Please arrive at your appointment with some urine in your bladder, as a urine dipstick test will be performed before treatment to check for infection or blood in the urine (haematuria).

A catheter will then be inserted into the bladder while you are lying down. The cytotoxic medication will be instilled into the bladder through the catheter.

Once the treatment time is complete, the bladder will be drained through the catheter into a urine bag.

After treatment

It is recommended that you drink at least two litres of water in the 24 hours following treatment. This helps to keep your urine pale yellow and assists in flushing the bladder.

Try to avoid caffeine and alcohol during this time, as these can irritate the bladder.

For the first 48 hours after treatment, wash the genital area with soap and water after each time you pass urine, and apply barrier cream to help protect the skin.

During this period, it is important to take precautions when handling urine to reduce the chance of you or your family members coming into contact with the cytotoxic medication.

Going to the toilet

- Sit down on the toilet when passing urine.
- After using the toilet, close the lid and flush using a full flush.
- If urine splashes onto the toilet seat, clean the area with soapy water before others use the toilet.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet.

- Wash any skin around the genital area that may have come into contact with urine.
- If you experience bladder leakage (incontinence):
- Use continence or sanitary pads during this time.
- Place used pads in a plastic bag, tie it securely, and dispose of it in the general rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after disposal.
- Clean any skin that may have come into contact with the pad.

Washing clothes and bedding

- If clothing, towels, or bedding become contaminated with urine within the first 48 hours after treatment, wash them as soon as possible using a normal washing machine cycle.
- If items cannot be washed immediately, place them in a sealed plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Avoid hand-washing contaminated items.
- Dry items in the sun if possible.

Sex and Protection

- Avoid sexual intercourse for the first 48 hours after treatment.
- Use condoms for one week after treatment during any sexual activity to reduce the risk of exposing your partner to the medication.
- Clean sex toys thoroughly with warm soapy water after use.

Side Effects

- Some side effects may occur after treatment and usually settle within 48 hours. These may include:
- Pain or burning when passing urine
- Passing urine more often than usual
- Needing to pass urine during the night
- Bladder discomfort
- Straining when passing urine
- These symptoms may be caused by chemical cystitis, which is irritation of the bladder lining from the medication.
- Other possible side effects include:
- Lower abdominal (suprapubic) discomfort
- Mild flu-like symptoms for up to 3–4 days
- Skin rash

When to get help – immediately present to the Emergency Department for:

- A temperature of 38° or higher
- Chills, sweats, shivers or shakes
- Unable to pass urine
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhoea

Contact Urologist or GP for:

- Passing urine more frequently, lasting longer than 3 days after treatment
- Blood in urine, or it appears cloudy or smells different to normal

If any symptoms worsen or concern you, contact your GP or Urology Associates for advice.

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