Side effects

Most people will have some side effects after BCG treatment, but these tend to become less noticeable over a few days after each dose of BCG. As the vaccine is put directly into your bladder rather than your bloodstream, the more severe side effects that may be associated with chemotherapy treatments for cancer are unlikely.

Common side effects

Between 50 - 80% of patients who have BCG treatment develop one of these side effects:

- urinary tract infections
- bladder discomfort
- flu-like symptoms which can last for two to three days
- an urgent and more frequent need to pass urine, which can last for two to three days
- blood in the urine

Drinking plenty of water and taking simple painkillers, such as paracetamol, may help. Please let your doctor or specialist nurse know if you have any particular problems as they can discuss additional treatments.

Occasional side effects

- a high temperature
- pain in the joints, or other parts of the body - these may be caused by an inflammatory reaction elsewhere in the body (eg, the liver and joints), likely to result from the immune reaction that BCG vaccine produces

Please contact your specialist nurse or your GP straight away if you develop such symptoms.

Rare side effects

There is a very small chance (less than 1 in 200) that a generalised infection with the BCG bacteria could develop. If this does happen, it can produce the following symptoms:

- fever and chills
- joint pain
• feeling sick or vomiting
• cough
• skin rash
• feeling extremely tired
• high temperature for more than 48 hours

This is very rare, and happens in less than 1% of all patients. If you get any of these symptoms during BCG treatment, you should contact your doctor straight away and make sure that the s/he knows that you are having BCG treatment.