

Chemotherapy Bladder Instillation

What is chemotherapy bladder instillation, and why do I need it?

Chemotherapy [kee-moe-THAIR-uh-pee] bladder instillation [in-stil-LAY-shun] is a treatment for bladder cancer. During treatment, liquid chemotherapy medication is placed into your bladder through a catheter [CATH-eh-ter] (a thin, flexible tube). The medication kills cancer cells on the bladder wall and may prevent or delay their return. The usual treatment course is once a week for 6 weeks.

You should try to hold the medication in your bladder for 1 to 2 hours before urinating (peeing). To help with this, it's a good idea to drink only small amounts of fluid during the 2 hours before treatment. If you take a diuretic [die-you-RET-tk] (water pill), don't take it for 2 hours after treatment.

Is chemotherapy bladder instillation safe?

Yes. The chemotherapy medications stay in your bladder until you urinate. The medication is not absorbed to other parts of your body. You will not experience the types of side effects that come with other common chemotherapies, such as hair loss and suppression of your immune (disease-fighting) system. See [page 2](#) for more information on side effects.

What do I need to do next?

If you have received chemotherapy medicine, you and your caregivers need to follow these steps to stay safe:

- 1** For 24 hours (1 full day) after chemotherapy treatment:
 - Drink a lot of water or other fluids to help flush out the medication.
 - Wear gloves when handling urine, soiled diapers, or incontinence pads.
 - The first time you urinate after treatment, you should sit to avoid splashing. Then, close the lid and flush twice.
 - Wash your genital area (private parts) after urinating as the medication irritates the skin.
 - Avoid all sexual activity for the first 24 hours and use a condom until 48 hours (2 full days) after treatment.
- 2** Do not allow anyone who is pregnant or breastfeeding to handle anything that may contain your bodily fluids.
- 3** Wash your laundry separately from other household laundry. Follow these steps:
 - Wear gloves and hold dirty items away from your body when carrying them.
 - Wash your linens (sheets, towels, blankets) separately from other household laundry.
 - Machine wash bedsheets and towels in hot water. If clothing is heavily soiled with the medication, then run the clothing (separate from other laundry) through 2 full wash and rinse cycles.

What side effects can I expect?

Chemotherapy medications can cause serious irritation to any skin that they touch during urination. For this reason, **you and those caring for you, will need to take extra steps to avoid contact with your urine.** This includes contact with any items that might be soiled with urine such as your:

- Urinary catheter and tubing
- Soiled clothes
- Diapers or incontinence pads

Other side effects include:

- Urinary frequency (needing to pee a lot) and burning when you go.
- Bacterial bladder infection after the treatment.
- Permanent scarring or fibrosis of the bladder. This is rare, happening in 1 out of 250 cases. This causes the bladder to shrink and may lead to lifelong frequent urination.

Where can I learn more?

You can learn more about bladder cancer and treatment at the links below:

National Cancer Institute

<https://www.cancer.gov/types/bladder>

American Cancer Society

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/bladder-cancer/treating/intravesical-therapy.html>

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor or your cancer care team if you have unexpected or severe side effects from the medication, such as a:

- Rash
- Fever
- Unusual bleeding

If you have a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or the emergency medical service in your area.

Notes

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