



Information for bladder cancer patients receiving carbogen and nicotinamide (Niacinamide) with radiotherapy (BCON)

This information sheet is to tell you about a treatment you will be having as part of your bladder cancer treatment.

You have cancer in the bladder which requires a course of radiotherapy. We know from experience that in some patients radiotherapy alone does not completely remove the cancer. Cancer cells which have low levels of oxygen are less sensitive to radiation than those with normal or high levels of oxygen. As a result, our current standard radiotherapy treatment involves measures that help to increase the levels of oxygen in the tumour, this can be done in two ways.

1. Carbogen - this is a gas made up of 98% oxygen and 2% carbon dioxide which is given through a breathing mask while you are lying on the radiotherapy couch receiving treatment. For patients who feel uncomfortable wearing a mask they are able to receive the gas through a mouth piece. The mixture of gases (carbogen) is usually managed well with few recognised side effects. Other than the mild discomfort of wearing a mask, some patients feel a little short of breath which lasts for a few minutes. With practice and experience most patients overcome this and no longer notice any side effects after a few treatments.
2. Nicotinamide tablets (also known as Niacinamide or Nicotinic Acid) - this is a vitamin which helps increase blood flow in the tumour. The tablets will need to be taken 1½ - 2 hours before the radiotherapy treatment. Nicotinamide (Niacinamide) has a few side effects associated with it. The most common side effects are nausea and less commonly headaches, dizziness and flushing. These effects may be reduced by taking the tablets with food. If you suffer from any of these side effects please let us know, we may suggest either reducing the dose or stopping the tablets. However, if you have no problems you will be asked to take the tablets before each radiotherapy treatment throughout the course of your treatment. The tablets only need to be taken on days when you receive treatment usually this is Mondays to Fridays and not at weekends.

Both nicotinamide (Niacinamide) and carbogen have been used widely across the world during the development of this form of treatment

The main side effects of having radiotherapy to the bladder are discomfort in your bowels, loosening of bowel motions, an increased frequency and urgency of urination, stinging during urination and fatigue. You will be asked to empty your bladder before treatment each day.

During your treatment you will be seen weekly by your clinical team (Doctor/Specialist Radiographer/Nurse Clinician) to assess for any side effects of the treatment. The radiographers on the treatment machines will also perform routine checks daily and ask about any issues you may have and ensure you are managing to take the tablets every day.

For more information about the radiotherapy treatment, please refer to the “Radiotherapy to the Bladder” booklet which should be given to you prior to consenting to the treatment. This can also be accessed on The Christie internet page (www.christie.nhs.uk) or via any of our information departments at The Christie, or our Oldham and Salford Radiotherapy Satellite Centres.

You can also contact your team on the following numbers;

Urology Specialist Radiographer

Hannah Nightingale 0161 918 2096

Nurse Clinicians

Jeanette Lyons/Kamlesh Patel 0161 446 8594

Review team at The Christie at Oldham

0161 918 7700

Review team at The Christie at Salford

0161 918 7811

For queries about symptoms or side effects out of hours

The Christie Hotline 0161 446 3658
(24 hours)

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

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For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit www.christie.nhs.uk or visit the cancer information centre at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
Wilmslow Road
Withington
Manchester M20 4BX

Tel: 0161 446 3000
www.christie.nhs.uk

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