

Facts About Bladder Cancer

More than 60,000 new cases of bladder cancer are diagnosed every year in the USA, with the majority of cases occurring in males. In fact, bladder cancer is the fourth most common cancer in American men.

Risk Factors for Bladder Cancer

Known risk factors for bladder cancer include:

- Age
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- Male gender
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- Smoking tobacco
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- Exposure to chemicals such as with textile and dye workers, tire and rubber workers, chemical plant workers, heavy metal workers, painters, and hairdressers.
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About Bladder Cancer

The bladder is an organ in the pelvis which collects and stores urine.

- The majority of bladder cancers are a type called transitional cell carcinoma. There are several other known types.
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- Superficial bladder cancer is not invasive, accounts for the majority of diagnosed bladder cancers, and has excellent prognosis and survival.
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- Invasive bladder cancer is more likely to spread to other parts of the body and more likely to recur and require more aggressive therapies.
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Signs and Symptoms of Bladder Cancer

- Blood in urine
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- Painful urination
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- Frequent urination
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- Urgency to urinate
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- Low back or flank pain
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These symptoms might not be caused by bladder cancer, but are important to have checked by a physician.

Diagnosing Bladder Cancer

If you are experiencing signs or symptoms of bladder cancer, you should seek medical attention right away. Your physician can tell you more about appropriate labs, imaging, procedures, and biopsies that can make the diagnosis of bladder cancer. If bladder cancer is found, the American Joint Cancer Commission (AJCC) recommends specific imaging tests to stage the disease.

Treating Bladder Cancer

Treatment options are based on the type of cancer, stage, and performance status of the patient. The vast majority of bladder cancer is diagnosed early is potentially curable. The main treatments include:

- Surgery to remove part or all of the bladder
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- Radiation therapy where radiation oncologists use high energy photons and electrons in tight beams to eradicate the tumor
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- Chemotherapy where a medical oncologist uses cytotoxic medications to kill cancer cells
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- Immunotherapy where medications are used to stimulate your immune system to fight cancer
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Surgery is often the primary treatment for bladder cancer. For patients who wish preserve their bladder, doctors are sometimes able to surgically remove part of the bladder and the patient subsequently receives radiation and chemotherapy.

Radiation Therapy Options for Bladder Cancer

External beam radiation therapy is the main type of radiation used to treat bladder cancer, often in combination with chemotherapy. Our external beam radiation therapy utilizes a tight CT scan guided beam of photons and electrons to eradicate tumor cells. We utilize 3-dimensional conformal radiotherapy which combines multiple radiation treatment fields to deliver precise doses of radiation to the cancer while sparing healthy tissue. These treatments are usually delivered on week days for less than 30 minutes each. Your radiation oncologist, physicist, and dosimetrist will calculate the exact number of weeks of therapy and the daily dose fractions that are right for you.

Potential Side Effects

Side effects are usually temporary and usually limited to the area that received radiation. Side effects include but are not limited to:

- Skin irritation, nausea, bladder irritation, cramping, pressure, diarrhea and fatigue
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- Sexual problems, such as vaginal dryness or difficulty achieving an erection
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Talk to your doctor about any symptoms you may have and how best to address them.