

# about bladder cancer

Bladder cancer affects men and women differently. For example, more than three times as many men get bladder cancer, compared with women. However, bladder cancer is often more advanced in women by the time it is diagnosed.

At Cancer Care of Western New York, we are committed to providing the latest in radiation treatment technology. We believe that having state-of-the-art equipment makes a real difference in the quality of care we provide to all of our patients.

## The Bladder

Your bladder holds the urine produced by your body until you are ready to urinate. It is part of your urinary tract, along with your kidneys (which produce urine), ureters (which transport it to your bladder), and urethra (which takes urine out of your body).

## Risk Factors

Studies have shown that smokers have twice the risk of getting bladder cancer compared with nonsmokers. Bladder cancer has also been linked to many other risk factors, including exposure to certain chemicals, family history, frequent bladder infections, high-fat diets, birth defects, and even an herb that is used for weight loss.

## Signs and Symptoms

Unfortunately, many people who get bladder cancer do not have any noticeable symptoms until the disease is advanced (and therefore less curable). If you are at high risk for getting bladder cancer, talk with your physician about early screening tests.

The most common signs of bladder cancer include:

- Blood in the urine, also called hematuria (depending on the amount of blood in your urine, you may not be able to see a noticeable difference in color; your physician can use a laboratory test to see if blood is present)
- A burning sensation when you urinate (may also be caused by a urinary tract infection)
- Feeling a strong urge to urinate, but only urinating a small amount
- Urinating more frequently than usual



## Screening and Diagnosis

Bladder cancer may be diagnosed through a biopsy during cystoscopy (in which your physician examines the inside of your bladder through a medical scope). We then use laboratory tests and imaging studies (including imaging the kidneys) to evaluate the extent of the disease.

## Types of Bladder Cancer

There are three different types of bladder cancer—each one is named after one of the types of cells that make up your bladder.

**Urothelial carcinoma**—the most common type of bladder cancer, found in the cells that line the inside of your bladder.

**Squamous cell carcinoma**—this type of cancer often forms due to long-term bladder inflammation or irritation.

**Adenocarcinoma**—found in the cells that make up your glands.

Bladder cancer is also typically classified into either superficial or invasive cancer. Superficial bladder cancer is found in the lining of the bladder, while invasive bladder cancer has spread further.

## Treatment Options

**Superficial Bladder Cancer.** The initial step in treating superficial bladder cancer is surgical removal of the tumor. A cystoscopy places a tube through your urethra so a urologist can visualize your bladder. The tumor is removed through this tube. The procedure is called a TransUrethral Resection of Bladder Tumor (TURBT). Depending on the grade and extent of the tumor your urologist may recommend observation or periodic injections of a medication into your bladder through the urethra.

**Muscle Invasive Bladder Cancer.** There are two ways to treat muscle invasive bladder cancer. One option is surgery and the other option is external beam radiation. If you choose surgery, a urologist will remove your bladder and nearby lymph nodes. The ureters (which connect your kidneys to your bladder) will drain urine into a bag, which will be attached to your abdomen. If you choose external beam radiation a urologist will first remove as much of the tumor as possible using a tube in your urethra—a TURBT. Radiation will be delivered for 15 minutes every day for approximately 7 weeks. Chemotherapy will also be delivered periodically throughout your course of radiation.

As part of your treatment plan, you may have already met some of the specialists at Western New York Urology Associates—a leading group of urologists who can help oversee all aspects of your bladder cancer treatment. This practice group has been around since 1949 and provides care for a wide variety of urological conditions.

**Your physician and the Patient Advocates at Cancer Care of Western New York can answer any additional questions you may have, and help you determine which treatment is right for you.**