

Bladder Cancer

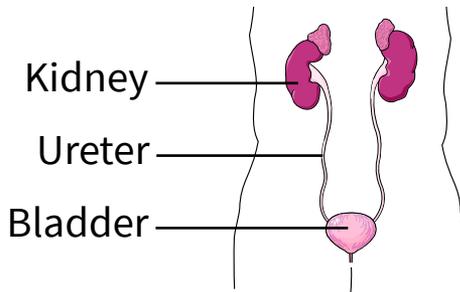
Urologist: _____

Clinic phone: _____

Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer is a common cancer of the urinary tract. The urinary tract is the body's system that makes, stores, and gets rid of urine (pee).

Parts of the urinary tract



What is the bladder?

- The **bladder** is a hollow, muscular organ in the lower part of your abdomen (stomach area), behind your pubic bone.
- Urine travels from each kidney down thin tubes called **ureters**, into your bladder. It is stored in your bladder until you urinate (pee).
- When you urinate, your bladder muscles squeeze and push the urine out through another tube, called the **urethra**.

Who is at a higher risk for bladder cancer?

- You may be at a higher risk for bladder cancer if:
 - › **You smoke.** The chemicals in tobacco can irritate (bother) your bladder lining. This is the most common cause of bladder cancer.
 - › **You are 55 years old or older.**
 - › **You are male.** Bladder cancer is more common in males than females.
 - › **You have been exposed to certain chemicals,** like certain dyes or chemicals used to make rubber, leather, or paint.
 - › **You have chronic (ongoing) bladder problems,** like frequent infections or kidney stones, or have used a catheter (tube to drain urine) for a long time.
 - › **You have had cancer treatment,** like radiation to the pelvis or certain chemotherapy medications.
 - › **You or a close relative have had bladder cancer before.**
- Even if you are at a higher risk for bladder cancer, you can help lower your risk by:
 - › Having regular check-ups with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner)
 - › Stopping smoking

What are the symptoms of bladder cancer?

- The most common symptom is having **blood in your urine**. This is called **hematuria**. This is often painless and may come and go.
 - › Your urine may look pink, red, or dark brown.
 - › You may not see any blood in your urine. Blood may only be found on a urine test.
- Other symptoms include:
 - › Needing to urinate more often than usual
 - › Pain or burning when you urinate
 - › Feeling an urgent need to urinate, even when your bladder is not full
 - › Pain in your lower abdomen or back (especially on 1 side)
- **If you have any of these symptoms, make an appointment with your primary health care provider right away.** These symptoms can be caused by many things, but it is important to get checked right away.

How is bladder cancer diagnosed?

- If your doctor thinks you may have bladder cancer, you may have these tests:
 - › **Urine tests** to look for blood, cancer cells, or signs of infection
 - › **Imaging tests** (like an ultrasound, a CT scan, or an MRI) to check your kidneys, ureters, and bladder for any growths or blockages
 - › **A cystoscopy:** A small camera will be put into your bladder so your bladder lining can be examined. This is the main test used to find bladder tumours.
 - › If a tumour is found, you may need a **transurethral resection of bladder tumour (TURBT)** to remove it. A pathologist will then examine the tissue taken during the TURBT under a microscope.
- These tests will help find out:
 - › If you have cancer
 - › What type and stage of cancer you have
 - › What treatment you need

How is bladder cancer treated?

- This will depend on how deeply the cancer has grown into your bladder wall and whether it has spread anywhere else in your body.
- Common treatments include:
 - › **Intravesical therapy:** Medication is placed directly into the bladder through a small catheter
 - › **Surgery** to remove the tumour or, in some cases, the whole bladder
 - › **Chemotherapy or radiation therapy** to kill the cancer cells or shrink the tumour

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Department of Urology, Central Zone
Illustration by: LifeART Super Anatomy 1 Images, Copyright © 1994,
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WJ85-0500 © March 2026 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed March 2029 or sooner, if needed.
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