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# Bladder Cancer

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](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

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

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Urologist: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clinic phone: \_\_\_\_\_



## 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.

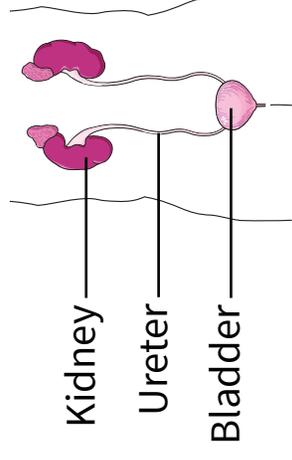
## How is bladder cancer diagnosed?

- 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

## 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.