



When you read up about your physical condition, you take an important tool into your own hands. The more you know about your physical condition, and the more positive steps you take, the better your chance for positive outcomes and treatment success.

Health Topic: Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer is the cancer that forms in the lining of the bladder. The primary form is transitional cell cancer. Other much less common forms include adenocarcinoma and squamous cell cancer. Bladder cancer is often related to chemical exposure. The most common carcinogen would be tobacco. A number of other chemical exposures can also be contributory. These chemicals get into the blood, are filtered by the kidneys and get into the urine.

Bladder cancer commonly presents with blood in the urine. Alternatively, sometimes the patient may have only pain or irritation so any of these symptoms need to be investigated by a Urologist. Bladder cancer is usually identified via Cystoscopy (looking into the bladder through the urethra with a telescope). Abnormalities then will require surgical removal and/or biopsy. X-Ray and other lab tests are often helpful in these evaluations.

The severity of bladder cancer is dependent on the Stage and Grade of the cancer. Stage is defined as the extent of the cancer. For example, it can be in just the lining of the bladder, invasive into the muscle wall of the bladder or have spread to lymph nodes, bone, liver, lungs or elsewhere. Grade refers to the aggressiveness of the tumor. More aggressive or high grade tumors are much more likely to present with more advanced disease.

Treatment is dependent on the Stage and Grade. Lower grade tumors that are just in the lining of the bladder are commonly treated with removal using a surgical telescope through the urethra. Tumors invading into the muscle wall of the bladder might be treated with removal of the bladder. Reconstruction of this can sometimes recreate a functional bladder. There are situations between these two extremes where less invasive therapy might be adequate. Milder forms of bladder cancer don't tend to spread but they do require careful life-long monitoring.

Prevention of bladder cancer involves avoiding carcinogens such as tobacco, maintaining a good fluid intake to keep the urine dilute and seeking Urologic care if you experience any degree of blood in the urine, unexplained bladder pain or bladder irritation.