

Bladder Cancer

The National Cancer Institute (<http://www.cancer.gov/>), lists bladder cancer as one of 13 common causes of cancer and provides the following information.

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Understanding Cancer

Cancer begins in cells, the building blocks that make up *tissues*. Tissues make up the organs of the body. Normally, cells grow and divide to form new cells as the body needs them. When cells grow old, they die, and new cells take their place.

Sometimes this orderly process goes wrong. New cells form when the body does not need them, and old cells do not die when they should. These extra cells can form a mass of tissue called a growth or *tumor*.

Not all tumors are cancer. Tumors can be *benign* or *malignant*.

Benign tumors are not cancer:

- Benign tumors are rarely life-threatening.
- Usually, benign tumors can be removed, and they seldom grow back.
- Cells from benign tumors do not spread to tissues around them or to other parts of the body.

Malignant tumors are cancer:

- Malignant tumors generally are more serious than benign tumors. They may be life-threatening.
- Malignant tumors often can be removed, but they can grow back.
- Cells from malignant tumors can invade and damage nearby tissues and organs. Also, cancer cells can break away from a malignant tumor and enter the bloodstream or lymphatic system. That is how cancer cells spread from the original cancer (*primary tumor*) to form new tumors in other organs. The spread of cancer is called *metastasis*.

Bladder Cancer

No one knows the exact causes of bladder cancer. However, it is clear that this disease is not contagious. No one can "catch" cancer from another person.

People who get bladder cancer are more likely than other people to have certain *risk factors*. A risk factor is something that increases a person's chance of developing the disease.

Still, most people with known risk factors do not get bladder cancer, and many who do get this disease have none of these factors. Doctors can seldom explain why one person gets this cancer and another does not.

Studies have found the following risk factors for bladder cancer:

- **Age.** The chance of getting bladder cancer goes up as people get older. People under 40 rarely get this disease.
- **Tobacco.** The use of tobacco is a major risk factor. Cigarette smokers are two to three times more likely than nonsmokers to get bladder cancer. Pipe and cigar smokers are also at increased risk.

- **Occupation.** Some workers have a higher risk of getting bladder cancer because of carcinogens in the workplace. Workers in the rubber, chemical, and leather industries are at risk. So are hairdressers, machinists, metal workers, printers, painters, textile workers, and truck drivers.
- **Infections.** Being infected with certain parasites increases the risk of bladder cancer. These parasites are common in tropical areas but not in the United States.
- **Treatment with cyclophosphamide or arsenic.** These drugs are used to treat cancer and some other conditions. They raise the risk of bladder cancer.
- **Race.** Whites get bladder cancer twice as often as African Americans and Hispanics. The lowest rates are among Asians.
- **Being a man.** Men are two to three times more likely than women to get bladder cancer.
- **Family history.** People with family members who have bladder cancer are more likely to get the disease. Researchers are studying changes in certain genes that may increase the risk of bladder cancer.
- **Personal history of bladder cancer.** People who have had bladder cancer have an increased chance of getting the disease again.

People who think they may be at risk for bladder cancer should discuss this concern with their doctor. The doctor may suggest ways to reduce the risk and can plan an appropriate schedule for checkups.

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