

# Bladder cancer



You've just learned that you have bladder cancer. Here is some information you need to know to understand the disease and possible treatments.

## What is bladder cancer?

The bladder is a balloon-shaped organ that stores urine produced by the kidneys. It consists of several layers: an inner lining that's in contact with the urine and an outer layer made of a muscle, which contracts to evacuate the urine. The disease occurs when cells from the inner lining multiply uncontrollably. This forms a mass called a "tumour." It can interfere with bladder function.

If the tumour remains on the lining, it's considered a superficial cancer. If it goes in the muscle, it is considered an invasive cancer.

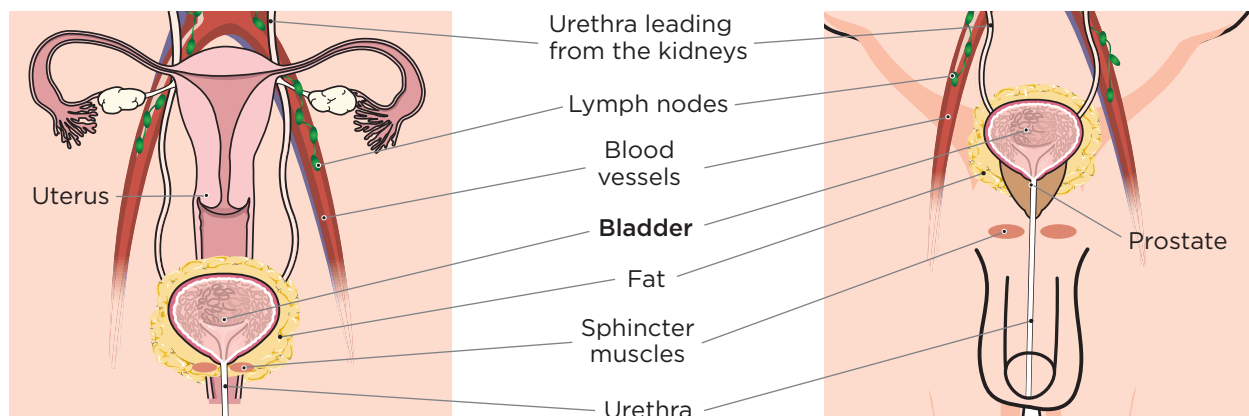
## Who is most likely to be affected by this cancer?

In Canada, 3 times as many men as women develop this cancer. The average age at diagnosis is 65. But the disease can appear at any age.

## What are the causes of bladder cancer?

The direct causes are still not well understood, but the most frequent risk factors are:

- smoking
- exposure to toxic chemicals in the workplace
- having had bladder cancer in the past
- being over the age of 50
- having had chemo or radiation therapy



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## What are the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer?

There are various symptoms that may indicate the presence of bladder cancer. However, it's important to note that some other diseases can cause the same signs.

The following symptoms should be evaluated by a doctor:

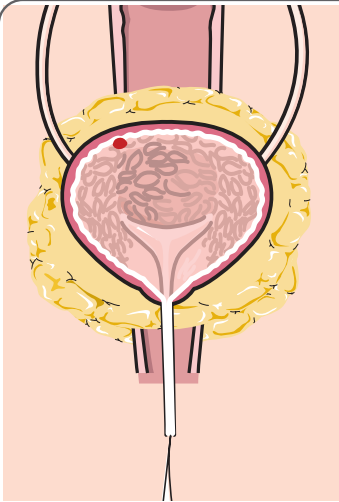
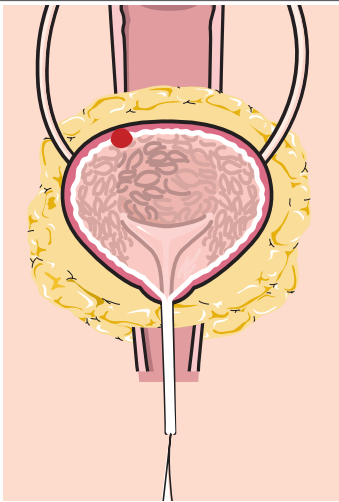
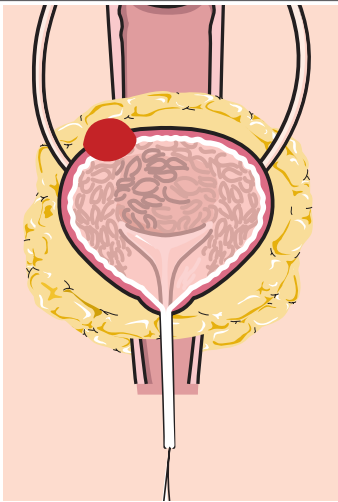
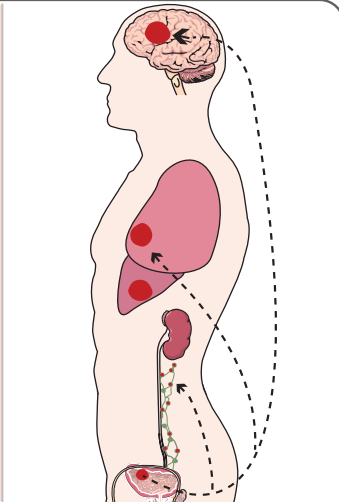
- **blood in the urine**
- need to urinate frequently
- pressing need to urinate
- pain or burning sensation when you urinate

## What are the stages in bladder cancer?

The system used to describe the stages is called TNM, which stands for Tumour Node Metastasis.

- **T**: how far the **tumour** has penetrated into the bladder lining
- **N**: presence of tumours in the lymph **nodes** (small organs that filter the blood)
- **M**: presence of **metastases** in other organs. Metastases are new tumours created from cancer cells that have detached from the primary cancer.

### The 4 stages of bladder cancer

			
Stage 0-I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV
<p>The cancer is contained within the superficial layer of the bladder lining.</p>	<p>The cancer has crossed the bladder lining to grow into the muscle of the bladder wall.</p>	<p>The cancer has crossed the muscle of the bladder wall and grown into adjacent tissues and organs: fat, prostate (in men), uterus or vagina (in women).</p>	<p>The cancer has reached distant organs, such as the lungs, liver, bones, etc. These are metastases.</p>

## How will the decision be made about my treatments?

It depends on the characteristics of the cancer and how far it has advanced. Your age, overall state of health and wishes will also be taken into account.

Several doctors from various specialties will meet first to discuss possible treatments. Your doctor will explain the proposed treatments, anticipated benefits and possible side effects to you. You will be involved in the final choice.

## What are the possible treatments?

Various treatments may be used in combination:

- > **Surgery.** There are several options, depending on the stage of your cancer.
  - removing tumours inside the bladder (transurethral resection). This surgery is performed with an endoscope, a small tube with a camera and instruments. It is inserted through the urinary meatus – the opening through which urine leaves your body.
  - removing part of the bladder (partial cystectomy) or the entire bladder (radical cystectomy). These operations remove the tumours and certain adjacent tissues if they have been affected.
- > **Chemotherapy.** This involves injecting medication into your bladder or your veins to destroy cancer cells.



- > **Immunotherapy.** This treatment strengthens your immune system and helps it find and destroy cancer cells.

- > **Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine** immunological therapy. BCG is a vaccine made from live bacteria. It was originally developed for the prevention of tuberculosis. Injected into your bladder, it stimulates your immune system to shed all cancer cells and helps prevent a recurrence of the cancer.
- > **Radiation therapy.** This treatment sends radiation to the tumour to shrink or totally destroy it.



- > **Clinical trials or research protocols.** These are ways of trying out new medications or treatments and evaluating their effectiveness and safety.
- > **Complementary therapies.** Yoga, tai chi, meditation and visualization may be recommended in addition to medical treatments. They can improve your sense of well-being and reduce your stress. However, they are not cures for cancer.

### Parallel treatments

Some people opt to treat cancer with medicinal plants, high doses of vitamins, colonic irrigation or strict diets. Before you consider any of these treatments, talk to a member of your care team. Some of these options can have harmful effects on your other treatments.

## What is the follow-up procedure?

Regular long-term follow-up is extremely important. You'll have various examinations so that your care team can follow up on your state of health and adjust your treatments as needed.

Here are the main examinations you may have.

- **Cystoscopy.** An examination of the bladder, performed with a thin camera-mounted tube called an endoscope, which is introduced via your urinary meatus.
- **A scan (tomodensitometry) and ultrasound.** X-rays and ultrasounds let doctors see inside your body.
- **Palpating the armpits, abdomen and neck.** This is done to detect swollen lymph nodes or the presence of an abnormal mass.
- **Blood tests.** This is a follow-up on your general state of health.

## Where should I go for help or answers to my questions?

If you have questions, concerns or worries about your treatments and follow-up, feel free to contact any member of your care team.



Finding out that you have cancer can affect morale. Support is available to help you live with your new situation. A psychologist, social worker, sexologist and psychiatrist are available to you as members of your care team. Feel free to request their services.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Canadian Cancer Society:

- > **1 888 939-3333**
- > **[action.cancer.ca](http://action.cancer.ca)**

National Cancer Institute (U.S.):

- > **[cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)**

Bladder Cancer Canada:

- > **[bladdercancercanada.org](http://bladdercancercanada.org)**

Quebec Cancer Foundation:

- > **1 800 363-0063**
- > **[fqc.qc.ca](http://fqc.qc.ca)**

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website  
**[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)**

*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

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