

Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer occurs within the lining of the bladder, which stores the body's urine, and the exact causes of bladder cancer are unknown. It is the sixth most prevalent cancer in the United States and the fifth most common cancer diagnosed in Texas. Some of the symptoms for bladder cancer are quite similar to other non-cancer related illnesses, which can make bladder cancer difficult to diagnose. If detected early and treated, the five-year survival rate for bladder cancer is 95 percent.

Statistics

- In 2008, 68,810 new cases of bladder cancer will be diagnosed in the United States.
- This year alone, 14,100 Americans will die from bladder cancer.
- Nearly 700 Texans are expected to die from bladder cancer this year.
- The incidence of bladder cancer is nearly twice as likely in Caucasians as in African Americans, but African Americans have lower survival rates.

Risk Factors

- **Age:** The risk of developing bladder cancer increases with age.
- **Family History:** People with a family history of bladder cancer are at greater risk of developing the disease. Researchers believe bladder cancer can be genetic.
- **Personal History:** Individuals who have already had bladder cancer are at an increased risk of getting the disease again.
- **Gender:** Men are four times more likely than women to develop bladder cancer.
- **Tobacco:** Smokers are twice as likely to develop bladder cancer as non-smokers. In fact, 48 percent of bladder cancer deaths occur in men who smoke, compared to 28 percent in women who smoke.
- **Chemical Exposure:** People who work with dye, rubber, or leather are at a greater risk of developing the disease. Individuals with exposure to high levels of arsenic in their drinking water also are at a greater risk, as are those exposed to cyclophosphamide.
- **Parasites:** People infected with certain kinds of tropical parasites found outside the United States are at risk of developing bladder cancer.

Symptoms

The following may be symptoms of bladder cancer, but could be linked to other health conditions. If the following symptoms are present, individuals are encouraged to consult their physician:

- Blood in the urine; urine may appear slightly red or rusty in color
- Painful urination
- Frequent urination or feeling the need to urinate without being able to produce urine

Prevention

While there is no certain prevention, people should avoid the following risk factors when possible:

- Do not smoke. Smoking is believed to cause nearly half of bladder cancer deaths among men, and more than a quarter of bladder cancer deaths among women.
- Take precautions at work. Avoid working with a class of chemicals called aromatic amines, which have been linked to a higher bladder cancer incidence.
- Maintain a healthy diet. Eating a well-balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods and limiting intake of high-fat foods, red meat, and alcohol may decrease your risk of developing bladder cancer.

Treatment Options

Bladder cancer, depending on the stage, may be treated by different members of the cancer care team – urologists, medical oncologists, and radiation oncologists. Consultation with each of these specialists is encouraged where appropriate.

Treatment options vary depending on how advanced the cancer is and if it has spread to other parts of the body. Physicians will determine the most appropriate treatment for each patient, but in 90 percent of cases will perform surgery alone or in combination with other treatments. In some cases, immunotherapy or chemotherapy is administered directly to the bladder.

Sources: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and Texas Cancer Information