

BLADDER CANCER

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Basic Information about Bladder Cancer

1. May is the bladder cancer awareness month.
2. Bladder cancer is a disease in which malignant (cancer) cells form in the tissues of the bladder.
3. It is the 6th most common cancer in the US. An estimated 80,000 new cases were diagnosed in the US in 2017; among these, 60,000 were men and 20,000 were women.
4. Smoking is a well-known risk factor of bladder cancer.
5. The most common signs and symptoms are blood in the urine and pain during urination.

Initial Workup: Cystoscopy is the gold standard for the initial diagnosis and staging of bladder cancer. This procedure is done in your urologist's office. The risk is minimal: such as bleeding and infection.

Next Step: After bladder cancer has been diagnosed, the next step is to find out if cancer cells have spread within the bladder or to other parts of the body (staging). The stages of bladder cancer range from Stage 0 (Noninvasive Papillary Carcinoma and Carcinoma in Situ) to Stage IV. You will undergo some imaging studies, such as CT scan (CAT scan); MRI (magnetic resonance imaging); PET scan (positron emission tomography scan); Chest x-ray and bone scan, etc.

Treatment Options:

1. Non-muscle invasive disease (early stage cancer) is often treated with transurethral resection of bladder tumor (TURBT); followed by intravesical therapy with BCG (most common), or mitomycin.

BCG treatment is usually done by your urologist, is started a few weeks after a TURBT and is given once a week for 6 weeks. Sometimes long-term maintenance BCG therapy is given.

Treatment with BCG can cause symptoms that feel like having the flu, such as fever, chills, and fatigue. It can also cause a burning feeling in the bladder. Rarely, BCG can spread through the body, leading to a serious infection. One sign of this can be a **high fever** that isn't helped by aspirin or similar medicines.

2. Locally advanced or metastatic disease is often treated with chemotherapy followed by surgery, or immunotherapy.

There are currently five immunotherapy drugs approved for bladder cancer: atezolizumab (Tecentriq), avelumab (Bavencio), durvalumab (Imfinzi), Nivolumab (Opdivo) and pembrolizumab (Keytruda); all given intravenously.

Common side effects of these drugs include fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, fever, urinary tract infections, rash, diarrhea, and constipation.

Less often, more serious side effects can occur. These drugs work by basically removing the brakes on the body's immune system. Sometimes the immune system starts attacking other parts of the body, which can cause serious or even life-threatening problems in the lungs, intestines, liver, hormone-making glands, or other organs.

Reference:

1. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/bladder>
2. <https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/bladder-cancer/overview>
3. <https://medlineplus.gov/bladdercancer.html>

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