

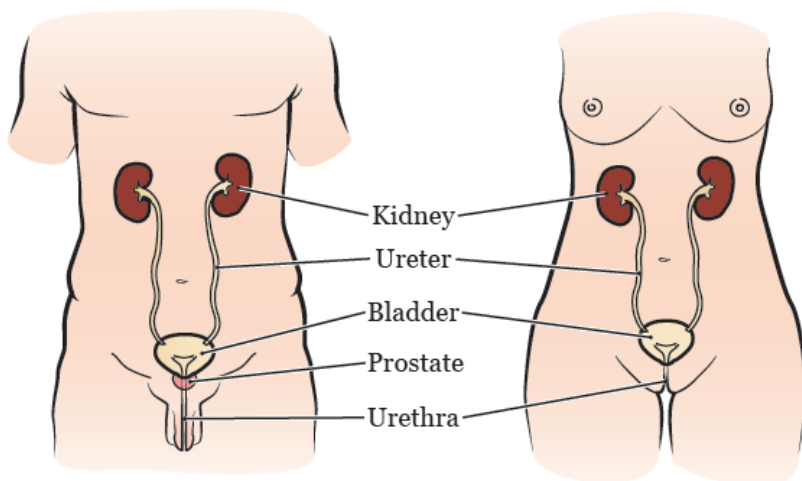
# A guide to bladder cancer & its symptoms

## DISCLAIMER:

This website and document is a guide and while it is written by professionals, we advise you to see your doctor if you have any symptoms.

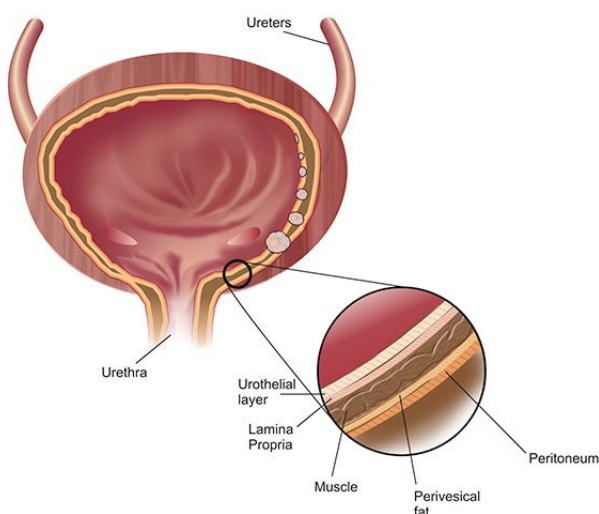
## What is a bladder?

The bladder is a storage organ connected to the kidneys from above on either side by a ureter and below to the urethra. In men, the prostate is found at the base of the bladder and urine passes through it.



Urine is stored in the bladder until the brain tells us we need to urinate (pee or wee).

The bladder is made up of several layers. The inner urothelial layer (superficial) and the deeper muscle layer are important to understand, as they are often referred to when discussing the stages of bladder cancer.



## What is bladder cancer?

Bladder cancer occurs when cells inside the organ grow out of control. As more cancer cells develop, they can form a tumour. Most bladder cancers start in the innermost lining of the bladder, which is called the urothelium or transitional epithelium. As the cancer grows into or through the other layers in the bladder wall, it becomes more advanced. Over time, the cancer might grow outside the bladder and into nearby structures. It might spread to nearby lymph nodes, distant lymph nodes, the bones, the lungs, or the liver. This is known as metastasis.



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According to Cancer Council Australia:

- In 2018, 2,968 new cases of bladder cancer were diagnosed in Australia. In 2022, it is estimated that 3,219 new cases of bladder cancer will be diagnosed in Australia
- Bladder cancer is common in people aged over 60 and is significantly more common in men than in women (approx 3:1 ratio men to women)
- In 2020, there were 1,084 deaths caused by bladder cancer in Australia. In 2022, it is estimated that there will be 1,043 deaths

## Symptoms of bladder cancer

How do you know if you might have bladder cancer?

You may experience one or more of the following:

- Blood in the urine (Haematuria)
- Change in urination patterns
- Pain when urinating (Dysuria)
- Needing to urinate frequently (Frequency)
- Burning sensation when urinating (Dysuria)
- Incontinence
- Urinary tract infections that don't respond to antibiotics
- Lower tummy (abdominal) pain
- Lower back pain
- Weight loss
- Tiredness



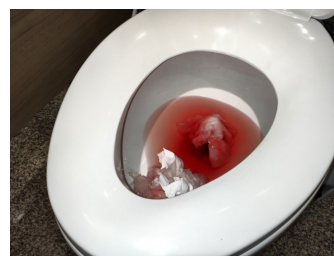
To learn more about the symptoms of bladder cancer, click **here** to watch a video by Prof Simon Willcock.

## What is Haematuria?

Haematuria is blood in the urine. There are two types of haematuria, including:

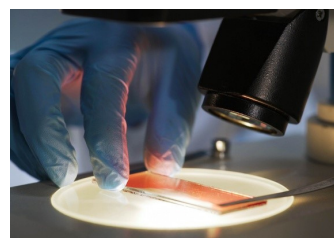
### 1. Macroscopic haematuria -

the blood can be seen with the naked eye (*right*).



### 2. Microscopic haematuria -

the blood cells in the urine are seen under a microscope by a pathologist or noted by a colour change on a plastic strip that is dipped into the urine (urine dipstick) (*right*).



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## If I have blood in my urine, does it mean I have bladder cancer?

Not always. There may be other causes, such as:

- Urinary tract infections
- Kidney/ureter/bladder stones
- Kidney/bladder infection
- Enlarged prostate in men
- Kidney disease
- Kidney cancer
- Inherited disorders
- Kidney injury
- Medications (blood thinners)
- Dyes (beetroot)
- Strenuous exercise
- In women, it may also come from the vagina, cervix or uterus (caused by menstruation or fibroids)



To learn more about the haematuria (blood in your urine), click **here** to watch a video by Prof Simon Willcock.

## Risk factors for bladder cancer

- Smoking - smokers are three times more likely to develop bladder cancer than non-smokers
- Age - the risk increases with age, but bladder cancer can be found in younger people too
- Gender - more prevalent among men, but women get it too
- Chemical exposure - arsenic, aromatic amines, aniline dyes, benzene
- Chronic infection - for example, Bilharzia
- Chronic irritation from long term catheter usage or bladder stones



**If there's blood  
in your pee,  
see your GP!**



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