

Urinary and Bladder Problems

Some cancer treatments, such as those listed below, may cause urinary and bladder problems:

- Radiation therapy to the pelvis (including reproductive organs, the bladder, colon and rectum) can irritate the bladder and urinary tract. These problems



For urinary and bladder problems caused by cancer treatments, drink plenty of water.

often start several weeks after radiation therapy begins and go away several weeks after treatment has been completed.

Ask your doctor what symptoms to call about—such as fever or pain, for example.

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- Some types of chemotherapy and immunotherapy can also affect or damage cells in the bladder and kidneys.
- Surgery to remove the prostate (prostatectomy), bladder cancer surgery, and surgery to remove a woman's uterus, the tissue on the sides of the uterus, the cervix, and the top part of the vagina (radical hysterectomy) can also cause urinary problems. These types of surgery may also increase the risk of a urinary tract infection.

Symptoms of a urinary problem

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what symptoms you may experience and ask which ones to call about. Some urinary or bladder changes may be normal, such as changes to the color or smell of your urine caused by some types of chemotherapy. Your health care team will determine what is causing your symptoms and will advise on steps to take to feel better.

Irritation of the bladder lining (radiation cystitis):

- pain or a burning feeling when you urinate
- blood in your urine ([hematuria](#))
- trouble starting to urinate
- trouble emptying your bladder completely ([urinary retention](#))
- feeling that you need to urinate urgently or frequently
- leaking a little urine when you sneeze or cough

- bladder spasms, cramps, or discomfort in the pelvic area

Urinary tract infection (UTI):

- pain or a burning feeling when you urinate
- urine that is cloudy or red
- a fever of 100.5 °F (38 °C) or higher, chills, and fatigue
- pain in your back or abdomen
- difficulty urinating or not being able to urinate

In people being treated for cancer, a UTI can turn into a serious condition that needs immediate medical care. Antibiotics will be prescribed if you have a bacterial infection.

Symptoms that may occur after surgery:

- leaking urine (urinary incontinence)
- trouble emptying your bladder completely

Ways to prevent or manage

Here are some steps you may be advised to take to feel better and to prevent problems:

- **Drink plenty of liquids.** Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of fluid each day, so that urine is light yellow or clear. You'll want to stay away from things that can make bladder problems worse. These include caffeine, drinks with alcohol, spicy foods, and tobacco products.
- **Prevent urinary tract infections.** Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about ways to lower your chances of getting a urinary tract infection. These may include going to the bathroom often, wearing cotton underwear and loose fitting pants, learning about safe and sanitary practices for catheterization, taking showers instead of baths, and checking with your nurse before using products such as creams or lotions near your genital area.

Talking with your health care team

Prepare for your visit by making a list of questions to ask. Consider adding these questions to your list:

- What symptoms or problems should I call you about?
- What steps can I take to feel better?
- How much should I drink each day? What liquids are best for me?
- Are there certain drinks or foods that I should avoid?

Related Resources

[New Treatment Approach Could Help Prevent Recurrences of Some Bladder Cancers](#)

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