



# Bladder Cancer

## What is Bladder Cancer?

Bladder cancer is a disease in which cells in the bladder grow uncontrollably, forming tumors. There are five different histologic types of bladder cancer, meaning the tumors arise from different tissues or cell types; this does not necessarily indicate how aggressive they are, but it does influence how they are treated.

## Symptoms and Progression

The most common type of bladder cancer, urothelial carcinoma, usually starts in the inner lining of the bladder, called the urothelium. As the disease progresses, tumors can spread into the bladder's muscular wall or to nearby organs such as the prostate, uterus, or vagina.

In early stages, symptoms may include blood in the urine (hematuria) and mild urinary frequency or urgency. In more advanced stages, symptoms can include pelvic or lower back pain, urinary obstruction, and weight loss or fatigue.

## Burden of Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer is the 10th leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. Each year, roughly 80,000–85,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with bladder cancer, and about 17,000–18,000 die from the disease.

## Bladder Cancer and Red Meat

Studies show that eating just 50 grams per day of processed red meat can increase bladder cancer risk by about 20% compared to diets with low or no meat consumption. This increased risk is linked to chemicals often found in processed meats, such as nitrates, nitrites, polycyclic aromatic

hydrocarbons, and heterocyclic amines—all of which are known to be associated with cancer in humans.

## Prevention

Bladder cancer risk can be reduced with lifestyle changes such as increasing water intake, engaging in regular physical activity, and eating a diet rich in healthy plant-based foods like fruits and vegetables—particularly citrus and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts)—while limiting red and processed meats.

## References

- American Cancer Society. Bladder Cancer. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer.html>
- Aveta et al. The Impact of Meat Intake on Bladder Cancer Incidence: Is It Really a Relevant Risk? *Cancers* (Basel). 2022;14(19):4775.
- Kwan et al. Lifestyle and Nutritional Modifiable Factors in the Prevention and Treatment of Bladder Cancer. *Urol Oncol*. 2018;37(6):380–386.

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. For specific health concerns, please contact a healthcare provider. Updated April 2026.*