



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)  
info@cancercaare.org  
www.cancercaare.org

fact sheet

# COPING WITH BLADDER CANCER

A diagnosis of bladder cancer can leave you and your loved ones feeling uncertain, anxious and overwhelmed. There are important treatment decisions to make, emotional concerns to manage, and insurance and financial paperwork to organize, among other practical concerns.

It is helpful to keep in mind that there are many sources of information and support for people coping with bladder cancer. By learning about this diagnosis and its treatment options, communicating with your health care team, and surrounding yourself with a support network, you will be better able to manage your bladder cancer diagnosis and experience a better quality of life.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PLAN

Bladder cancer occurs when the cells found in the urinary bladder (typically in the innermost lining) begin to change and grow uncontrollably, forming a tumor (also called a nodule), which can be either cancerous or benign.

About 95 percent of bladder cancers are classified as transitional cell carcinomas (also called urothelial carcinomas) which affect the cells that line the inside of the bladder. In approximately 70 percent of transitional cell carcinomas, the cancer is contained within the lining of the bladder.

Bladder cancer is most often diagnosed via a cystoscopy, a minimally invasive procedure in which a narrow tube is inserted into the urethra (the passageway that allows urine to be excreted from the body), enabling the doctor to see the inside of the

bladder. This procedure is sometimes combined with a biopsy, where a sample of cells is removed for further testing. There are a wide range of treatments for bladder cancer, including surgery, chemotherapy, transurethral resection (TUR) and immunotherapy (treatment that uses certain parts of the immune system to fight illnesses).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

As you manage your bladder cancer, it's important to remember that you are a consumer of health care. The best way to make decisions about health care is to educate yourself about your diagnosis and the members of your health care team, including nurses, social workers and patient navigators. Since medical appointments are the main time you will interact with your team, being as prepared as possible for these visits is important. It will help ensure that you understand your diagnosis and treatment, get answers to your questions, and feel more satisfied with your overall care. Read CancerCare's fact sheets, "Doctor, Can We Talk?": Tips for Communicating With Your Health Care Team" and "After a Bladder Cancer Diagnosis: Questions to Ask Your Doctor" to learn how you can communicate more effectively with your health care team.



(over)

## FINDING RESOURCES

While bladder cancer can present many challenges, keep in mind that you do not need to cope with this diagnosis on your own. Your friends and family are important sources of strength and support. There are also many local and national support services available to assist you.

**Financial Assistance.** There are many organizations that provide help with medical billing, insurance coverage, and reimbursement issues. There is also financial assistance available to help people who cannot afford the cost of their medications. Good places to start your research are the websites of the Cancer Financial Assistance Coalition ([www.cancerfac.org](http://www.cancerfac.org)) and the Partnership for Prescription Assistance ([www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org)). Read CancerCare's fact sheet, "Sources of Financial Assistance," to find more information on financial assistance organizations.

### **Benefits, entitlements, insurance and patient rights.**

Local and county government agencies can give you information on Social Security, state disability, Medicaid, income maintenance, the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and food stamps. Read CancerCare's fact sheets, "Patients' Bill of Rights and HIPAA" and "Understanding Your Insurance Coverage," to find more information.

## GET SUPPORT

Adjusting to and finding ways to cope with a bladder cancer diagnosis is an important part of healing, along with treatment. There are many organizations, such as CancerCare, that provide support services to help people affected by cancer. Individual counseling is available to help you learn ways to cope with the emotions and challenges raised by your diagnosis. Support groups can connect you with other in a safe, supportive environment. Cancer affects the whole person and their loved ones, so it's important to create a support network as part of managing your care.

Oncology social workers are licensed professionals who counsel people affected by cancer, providing emotional support and helping people access practical assistance. CancerCare's oncology social workers provide individual counseling, support groups and locate services face-to-face, online or on the telephone, free of charge. To learn more about free support services, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call 800-813-HOPE (4673).



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/cancercare](https://facebook.com/cancercare)

**Twitter:** @cancercare

*This fact sheet has been supported by a grant from Genentech and the Diana Napoli Fund.*



CANCERCARE®

National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

© 2017 CancerCare®