



## What is bladder cancer?

Bladder cancer is the growth of abnormal tissue (tumour) in the urinary bladder (referred to as ‘the bladder’). There are several stages of bladder cancer. Your treatment and experience depend on the specific characteristics of the tumour and the expertise of your medical team.

A tumour that grows towards the centre of the bladder without growing into the muscle tissue of the bladder is called non-muscle invasive. These tumours are superficial and represent an early stage. This is the most common type of bladder cancer. In most cases, these tumours are benign and rarely spread to other organs, so they are not usually lethal.

As the cancer grows into the muscle of the bladder and spreads into the surrounding muscles, it becomes muscle-invasive bladder cancer. This type of cancer has a higher chance of spreading to other parts of the body (metastatic) and is harder to treat. In some cases, it may be fatal.

### How is bladder cancer treated?

All decisions about the right treatment for you are taken after careful consideration of the tumour stage and grade, your prognosis, your general state of health,

the availability of treatment options at your hospital, and your personal preferences and values. The most important factors for selecting treatment are the stage and the aggressiveness of the disease.

Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer is treated by complete surgical removal of all visible tumours. This surgery, called transurethral resection (removal) of bladder tumours (TURBT), is performed endoscopically, through a tube inserted through the urethra into the bladder.

Standard treatment for muscle-invasive bladder cancer is a two-part procedure. The first step is the surgical removal of the urinary bladder (radical cystectomy). The second step, called urinary diversion, constructs a new way of storing and voiding urine. Bladder-preserving treatments are used under special circumstances and include combined chemotherapy and radiation (chemoradiation) and TURBT. New experimental techniques are in clinical trials.

Sometimes bladder cancer spreads to other parts of the body such as the lymph nodes or other organs. At this point, cure is unlikely, and treatment is limited to controlling the spread of the disease and reducing the symptoms.

## What is the impact of bladder cancer on my life?

After treatment, you may worry about your prognosis, voiding, sexual activity, relationships with family and friends, and the impact of cancer on your social or financial situation.

These worries are common. Most people who have been diagnosed with cancer, or their loved ones, will probably have these worries and thoughts. If you feel worried, contact your doctor. You can also ask the doctor about psychological support if you would like to talk with someone. Patient organizations can also offer support.

Cancer treatment can affect your sexuality. Feelings of depression and fatigue can also have a negative effect on your sex life. If you feel the need to have someone to talk to, you can ask your doctor for a referral to a psychologist. If you have a partner, it is important to talk with them about your feelings. There are many ways in which you can be intimate. If it is difficult for you to be sexually active, be near each other, touch each other, give and take hugs, and just sit or lay down close to each other.

The side effects of treatment can make it difficult to fully participate in social and economic life. Changes

in your daily life as a result of the disease or the treatment can lead to isolation. Talk to your doctor or nurse. They can help you find the support and treatment you need.

During treatment, particularly for muscle-invasive bladder cancer, you will be away from your work. Talk to your supervisor about the best way for you to get back to work. Perhaps you could work part time or in a different function.

Discuss the possible financial consequences of your treatment with your health care team. They might be able to direct you to people or places where you can get advice about your economic situation or even financial help.

A cancer diagnosis can make you look at life in a different way and you may realise you now have different priorities. This can affect your work or relationships and can make you feel disoriented and uncertain. Talk to family and friends and take all the time you need for this process. If you do not feel comfortable addressing these issues with those close to you, you can ask your health care team for a referral to a psychologist. The psychologist can give you the tools to deal with these feelings and help you to realise the changes you want or need.

This information was last updated in March 2016 and is subject to change following review by the European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) and EAU Guidelines Office.

This leaflet is part of a series of EAU Patient Information on Bladder Cancer. It contains general information about bladder cancer. If you have any specific questions about your individual medical situation you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider.

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The content of this leaflet is in line with the EAU Guidelines.

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