Bladder Cancer - Questions to Ask The Doctor [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 06/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some questions to ask your doctor or other members of your health care team to help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment plan, and overall care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Talking often with the doctor is important [3] to make informed decisions about your health care. These suggested questions are a starting point to help you learn more about your cancer care and treatment. You are also encouraged to ask additional questions that are important to you. You may want to print this list and bring it to your next appointment, or download Cancer.Net?s free mobile app [4] for an e-list and other interactive tools to manage your care.

Questions to ask after getting a diagnosis

- What type of bladder cancer do I have?
- Is it noninvasive or invasive? What does this mean?
- If the cancer is invasive, does it involve the muscle?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What is the stage of my cancer? What does this mean?
- What is the grade? What does this mean?

Questions to ask about choosing a treatment and managing side effects

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Do I need to start treatment right away?

- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
- What are the possible side effects of each treatment, both in the short term and the long term?
- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long? How can we manage any sexual side effects that may occur?
- Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before cancer treatment begins?
- If I?m worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Questions to ask about having surgery

- What type of surgery will I have?
- Will my entire bladder be removed?
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Do you have experience making urinary reservoirs? Can I have this type of surgery?

- How long will the operation take?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- Can you describe what my recovery from surgery will be like?
- What are the possible long-term side effects of having this surgery?
- How will the surgery affect my ability to urinate?
- Will I need to use a catheter?
- Will I need to have a urostomy? If so, how do I care for my urostomy?
- If I have a neobladder, how will I know when I need to empty it?

Questions to ask about having chemotherapy

- What type of chemotherapy do you recommend?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- How will it be delivered? Through an IV, a catheter, or a pill?
- How long will it take to give this treatment?
- How can I prepare for this treatment?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of this type of chemotherapy?
- What can be done to prevent or manage these side effects?

Questions to ask about having immunotherapy

- What type of immunotherapy do you recommend?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- How can I prepare for this treatment?
- How long will it take to give this treatment?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this treatment?
- What can be done to prevent or manage these side effects?

Questions to ask about having radiation therapy

- What type of radiation therapy do you recommended?
- What is the goal of radiation therapy?
- How long will it take to give radiation therapy?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this treatment?
- What can be done to prevent or manage these side effects?

Questions to ask about planning follow-up care

- What is the risk of the cancer returning? Are there signs and symptoms I should watch for?
- What long-term side effects or late effects are possible based on the cancer treatment I received?
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What follow-up tests will I need, and how often will I need them?

- How do I get a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to keep in my personal records?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care?
- What survivorship support services are available to me? To my family?

The next section in this guide is Additional Resources [5], and it offers some more resources on this website beyond this guide that may be helpful to you. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/bladder-cancer/questions-ask-doctor
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/24958
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/29951
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/18533