

3. Passing Urine

Problems passing urine associated with cancer may be caused by the type of cancer (e.g. prostate or bladder cancer) or a side effect of the treatment of cancer (e.g. following pelvic radiotherapy, or surgery). Symptoms can range from a need to pass urine more frequently, a burning sensation when passing urine, blood in the urine, bladder leakage or an inability to wait when one needs to pass urine.

How can I manage my urinary problems?

- Blood in the urine might be a sign of infection (especially in the presence of burning or stinging when passing urine). However there are other causes and medical advice should always be sought because further investigations may be required .
- Whilst undergoing treatment for cancer you can become more susceptible to infections and have trouble fighting an infection. Therefore if you experience any new urinary symptoms it is important to seek medical advice.
- Urinary symptoms are often related to what we eat and drink. Drinks containing caffeine can cause bladder irritation and make things worse. In order to improve your symptoms avoid caffeine and alcohol, drink normal amounts of fluids, avoid spicy food and reduce or give up smoking. Try to stay well hydrated (having enough fluid intake).
- Avoid constipation (as this puts pressure on the bladder) by drinking enough. Eat plenty of fibre and take regular gentle exercise (*See Constipation elsewhere in this directory*).
- Keep a diary of how much you drink and how frequently urine is passed.
- Your family doctor (GP), community nurse, or clinical nurse specialist may be able to suggest exercises to help prevent urine leakage. A continence nurse or a physiotherapist can give more detailed advice on pelvic floor exercises that might improve the symptoms of urine leakage.
- There are also *Just Can't Wait* cards available for use at certain public toilets, which might be helpful for those affected by an urgency to pass urine (see bladder and bowel foundation below). Alternatively a public toilet key scheme "RADAR" (Disability Rights UK) allows you access to over 7000 locked public toilets around the country (www.radar.org.uk/people-living-with-health-conditions-disability/the-national-key-scheme/).
- Changes in urine colour are common with some anticancer drugs and urine can adopt a medicine-like odour in some cases. The advice in this instance is to drink plenty of fluids.
- Continence aids (such as pads and special clothing) are available through the district nurse or continence nurse.
- Cranberries have been found to prevent bacteria from sticking to the walls of the bladder and are thought to help prevent urinary infections so you may wish to try regularly drinking cranberry juice or taking cranberry extracts. However, avoid cranberries if you have a catheter or are taking Warfarin tablets because they can affect how Warfarin works.

Local Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
Plymouth Community Healthcare Provides a continence nursing service locally to reduce the incidence of bladder and bowel dysfunction. Provides comprehensive and effective assessment, treatment advice and review. Please note that patients who require provision of incontinence pads should be referred to their own District Nurse via their GP surgery	Plymouth Community Healthcare 01752 434759 Open referral service
Macmillan Toilet Card This card can help if you need to use the toilet urgently when you are out as a result of your cancer treatment. Show this card to staff in shops etc to allow access to their facilities	Mustard Tree, Derriford Hospital: Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm 01752 430060/01752 431468 Kingsbridge: Tuesdays 10am to 4pm 01548 852349 Liskeard: Thursdays 10am to 4pm 01579 373500 Tavistock: Fridays 10am to 4pm 01822 615935
RADAR Key This will enable you to use locked public toilets.	A key is available at £4.50 from Disability Rights UK Tel: 0207 250 8191 Website: disabilityrightsuk.org
Mustard Tree Cancer Support & Triangle Drop In Centres Ask questions, share concerns, offers a range of services including benefits advice. Support, advice and information for cancer patients and their carers	Mustard Tree, Derriford Hospital: Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm 01752 430060/01752 431468 Kingsbridge: Tuesdays 10am to 4pm 01548 852349 Liskeard: Thursdays 10am to 4pm 01579 373500 Tavistock: Fridays 10am to 4pm 01822 615935
Other Resources	Your GP, Oncology Doctor, Specialist nurse or District Nurse.

National Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
The Bladder and Bowel Foundation Provides information on how to manage bladder problems.	www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org Helpline: 0845 345 0165 General Enquiries: 01536 533 255
Age UK	www.ageuk.org.uk
NHS Choices – living with incontinence	www.nhs.uk
Macmillan Cancer Support Provide comprehensive advice and information on all aspects of cancer.	www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 0000 (Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm)

Further information:

Macmillan Cancer Support booklets: – Available free from the Mustard Tree Macmillan Centre
Cancer and complementary therapies
Pelvic radiotherapy
Controlling cancer pain
Controlling the symptoms of cancer
Understanding chemotherapy
Understanding radiotherapy