

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH & BLADDER CANCER

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH?

Psychological health is about how we think, feel, and interact with others. It also includes how we handle life's challenges. Our thoughts, feelings, motivations, relationships, and behaviors are all shaped by our life experiences and how we cope with them.

Many people with bladder cancer can face different challenges that affect their psychological health. Some people may not face big challenges, but others might. These challenges can be short-term (for example, challenges that people face immediately after diagnosis and during treatment) or last longer (for example, challenges that last many months after treatment). It's important to know that it's okay to talk to your healthcare team about how you are feeling—you are not alone in this.

What Can Affect Your Psychological Health?

- A cancer diagnosis, treatments, or side effects.
- Your biology, like your genes or brain chemistry.
- Your life experiences.
- A family history of mental health conditions.
- The degree to which you are connected to people who can support you.

Bladder Cancer Patients Often Mention These Psychological Health Concerns:

- Uncertainty about the future, recurrence, and follow-up appointments.
- Anxiety, depression, anger, grief, and other emotions.
- Relationship or role changes.
- Worries about finances or experiencing prolonged physical pain.
- Having to adjust to life with bladder cancer.
- Unease in sharing deeply personal information with others.

Getting Help for Psychological Health

Psychological health concerns can be treated with **therapy, medication, and self-care**—including exercise, sleep, healthy eating, and relaxation techniques. Support is available from different professionals. Some are trained to help people with cancer. Choosing who to talk to depends on what you need:

- **Peer Support Groups:** Talking with others going through similar experiences can be helpful. Look for in-person or online groups where people share coping strategies.
- **Spiritual Support:** A chaplain or religious counselor can provide spiritual counseling, prayer, or connect you with religious resources.
- **Therapists:** These professionals are trained to help with emotional and mental health challenges. They may come from backgrounds in social work or psychology and offer support through psychotherapy and counseling.
- **Advanced Practice Providers:** Nurse Practitioners or Physician Assistants who specialize in psychiatry. They can treat mental health conditions with therapy and medicine.
- **Psychiatrists:** These doctors specialize in mental health. They can diagnose conditions, prescribe medicine, and offer therapy.
- **Helplines:** If you're in a crisis or just need someone to listen, there are 24/7 hotlines like the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988 in the U.S.). Or the BCAN Call Center (833-275-4222), with oncology social workers to help you find resources in your community.

HELPFUL TIPS

- *Give yourself grace.*
- *Share your feelings with your healthcare team.*
- *Use cancer support services.*
- *Rely on your support system.*

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TERMS TO KNOW

- **Anxiety:** Feeling worried, nervous, or stressed. It can also cause physical changes, like a fast heartbeat.
- **Chaplaincy:** a professional service in which “chaplains” offer counseling and spiritual guidance to individuals of all faiths (or none) during times of need, crisis, illness, grief, or ethical uncertainty.
- **Coping:** The means of finding ways to manage the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and practical challenges that come with your bladder cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery.
- **Depressive Disorder:** When someone feels sad for a long time and loses interest in things they once enjoyed.
- **Mindfulness:** Being focused on the present moment without getting distracted by worries or stress.
- **Insomnia:** Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
- **Psychotherapy:** A type of treatment where you talk with a professional to work through your emotional or behavioral concerns.
- **Psychotropic Medication:** Medications that affect the brain to treat mental health conditions.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A mental health condition that can happen after a traumatic event.
- **Resilience:** The ability to stay strong and handle tough situations.
- **Self-Esteem:** How you feel about yourself and how much you value yourself.

ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

- *What emotional or psychological challenges do others face during and after treatment?*
- *How can I access counseling services if I need them?*
- *Is there a bladder cancer support group here?*
- *Is there a mental health team available?*
- *Who should I contact if I have concerns about my psychological well-being?*
- *Is there access to spiritual care or chaplaincy services for people with bladder cancer dealing with emotional challenges?*
- *Are there resources for my family or caregivers to help them with their emotional challenges while they are helping me?*

RESOURCES

- BCAN.org
- **American Cancer Society:** cancer.org/survivorship
- **Cancer Care:** cancercare.org
- **Inspire:** inspire.org
- **NCCN:** nccn.org/patientresources
- **Psychology Today:** psychologytoday.com
- **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** 988lifeline.org

The Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network (BCAN)

BCAN's mission is to increase public awareness about bladder cancer, advance bladder cancer research, and provide educational and support services for the bladder cancer community.



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