

## Side Effects - **Bladder, bowel and urinary problems**

Bladder and bowel problems are among the most upsetting issues people face after cancer treatment. People often feel ashamed or fearful to go out in public.

### **Some cancer treatments may cause bladder, bowel or urinary problems:**

- Radiation therapy to the pelvis can irritate the bladder and urinary tract. These problems often start several weeks after radiation begins and go away several weeks after treatment.
- Chemotherapy and biological therapy can affect cells in the bladder and kidneys.
- Certain surgeries around the prostate, bladder, uterus, cervix and vagina can also cause urinary problems. These types of surgery may also increase the risk of a urinary tract infection.

### **Irritation of the bladder lining (radiation cystitis):**

- Pain or a burning feeling when you urinate
- Blood in your urine
- Trouble starting to urinate
- Trouble emptying your bladder completely
- Feeling that you need to urinate urgently or frequently
- Leaking a little urine when you sneeze or cough
- Bladder spasms, cramps or discomfort in the pelvic area

### **Urinary tract infection (UTI):**

- Pain or a burning feeling when you urinate
- Urine that is cloudy or red
- A fever of 100.4° F or higher, chills and fatigue
- Pain in your back or abdomen
- Difficulty urinating or not being able to urinate
- A UTI can turn into a serious condition when someone is receiving cancer treatment

### **Symptoms that may occur after surgery:**

- Leaking urine (incontinence)
- Trouble emptying your bladder completely

### **Here are some steps you may be advised to take to feel better and to prevent problems:**

- Drink plenty of liquids. Drink at least eight cups of fluid each day, so that urine is light yellow or clear. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods and tobacco.
- Prevent urinary tract infections. Use the bathroom often, wear cotton underwear and loose fitting pants, learn about safe and sanitary practices for catheterization, take showers instead of baths and check with your nurse before using creams or lotions near your genital area.

### **Talk with your health care team about:**

- Problems with constipation
- Kegel exercises
- Medicines that may help
- Help in coping with ostomies. If you have an ostomy, an opening from inside the body to the outside to pass urine or waste material, there are services and support groups to help you.