Bladder Cancer: What You Need to Know

Surgeon emphasizes that it's important to see a urologist if you notice any of the symptoms

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It's a relatively common type of cancer. That's the one thing Janet Kukreja, MD, director of urologic oncology at the CU Cancer Center and UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, wants people to know about bladder cancer.

"It's one of those cancers that, for some reason, not a lot of people talk about," she said. "It's something people don't really see on their radar when they get it, but it's incredibly common, and they're not alone."

Kukreja also wants people to know that only a doctor can confirm or rule out bladder cancer. "You really have to listen to your urologist and your doctor about your treatment options. And I think any of them, when it's not disease that's spread, are quite good and patients do quite well."

Following are some facts about bladder cancer, from the Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network:

Incidence of cases:

- Bladder cancer is diagnosed in about 85,000 people and kills 18,000 people annually in the United States.
- Bladder cancer is the seventh most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States. It is the fourth most common cancer in men (about 63,000 new cases annually) and seventh in women.

Causes of bladder cancer:

- Smoking is associated with about 50% of bladder cancer cases.
- Exposure to certain chemicals is linked to an increased risk, including chemicals found in printing materials, textiles, leather, rubber and certain paint products.

- Age: The disease is more common in people over age 55, and the average age of a person diagnosed is 73.
- Race: The reason is unclear, but Caucasians are twice as likely to be diagnosed with bladder cancer than African Americans or Hispanics. Asians have the lowest rate.

Bladder cancer warning signs:

- Blood in urine
- Painful urination
- Urgency to urinate, but no urinary tract infection
- Frequent urination
- Feeling the need but unable to urinate

In related news, Colorado University Football's Deion Sanders is cancer-free after bladder removal. Learn about the robotic surgery at CU that was used to remove and reconstruct Coach Prime's bladder that had a "very high-risk" tumor.

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