Overview

Bladder cancer accounts for approximately 90% of cancers of the urinary collecting system (renal pelvis, ureters, bladder, urethra). The bladder is an organ located in the pelvic cavity that stores and discharges urine. Urine is produced by the kidneys, carried to the bladder by the ureters, and discharged from the bladder through the urethra.

Types

Bladder cancer usually originates in the bladder lining, which consists of a mucous layer of surface cells that expand and deflate (transitional epithelial cells), smooth muscle, and a fibrous layer. Tumors are categorized as low-stage (superficial) or high-stage (muscle invasive).

In industrialized countries (e.g., United States, Canada, France), more than 90% of cases originate in the transitional epithelial cells (called **transitional cell carcinoma**; TCC). In developing countries, 75% of cases are squamous cell carcinomas caused by *Schistosoma haematobium*(parasitic organism) infection. Rare types of bladder cancer include small cell carcinoma, carcinosarcoma, primary lymphoma, and sarcoma.

Incidence and Prevalence

According to the National Cancer Institute, the highest incidence of bladder cancer occurs in industrialized countries such as the United States, Canada, and France. Incidence is lowest in Asia and South America, where it is about 70% lower than in the United States.

Incidence of bladder cancer increases with age. People over the age of 70 develop the disease 2 to 3 times more often than those aged 55–69 and 15 to 20 times more often than those aged 30–54.

Bladder cancer is 2 to 3 times more common in men. In the United States, approximately 38,000 men and 15,000 women are diagnosed with the disease each year. Bladder cancer is the fourth most common type of cancer in men and the eighth most common type in women. The disease is more prevalent in Caucasians than in African Americans and Hispanics.