Surgery to remove the bladder

Surgery to remove the bladder to treat cancer is called radical cystectomy. A radical cystectomy is a very major operation, often involving the removal of other organs as well as the bladder itself. This is to give the best chance of successful removal of the bladder cancer.

To give an idea of the scale, a radical cystectomy is similar in many ways to e.g. a heart bypass (coronary artery surgery), surgery on the aorta (the body’s biggest artery).

It is much bigger than e.g. a hip replacement, back surgery, hysterectomy, removal of a section of bowel.

During the operation the surgeons will remove your bladder and, in many cases, several of the surrounding organs to prevent future spread of the disease. They will then create an alternative method of getting rid of urine.

**Urinary stoma and bladder reconstruction**

If you have a radical cystectomy, your body will still need a way of getting rid of urine. As part of the same surgery as the removal of the bladder, we will create an alternative way for this to happen. There are two ways of doing this:

- Formation of a urinary stoma (ileal conduit), where urine is passed through a channel
into a bag attached directly to your body

- Some form of bladder reconstruction, where a pouch is made from bowel, so that urine is stored. The pouch is emptied either by passing urine via the waterpipe (urethra) in the usual way, or by use of a catheter that is passed into the pouch

**Partial cystectomy**

For rarer forms of bladder cancer such as adenocarcinoma, surgeons may carry out a partial cystectomy and remove part of the bladder. This type of operation is not suitable for many patients, so is not carried out very often.

**Muscle-invasive bladder cancer**

If your bladder cancer is known to be in the muscle wall of your bladder (muscle-invasive cancer), we may also consider chemotherapy, as well as surgery to give you the best chance of cure. There is information about chemotherapy under Cancer services.