

Risk Factors in Urology: Smoking

Cigarette smoking is a well-recognized risk factor of many diseases as well as cancers. This is also true regarding certain urologic cancers.

Within the urinary system, there is a lining of cells called urothelium. This cell layer extends from the kidneys down to the bladder. Urothelium is well known to be sensitive to the carcinogenic compounds present in cigarettes. Smoking, consequently increases the risk of cancer developing within this cell lining. This results in certain types of kidney cancers as well as most bladder cancers.

Smoking has also been associated with renal cell carcinoma, the most common type of kidney cancer. In addition, the amount of exposure to cigarette smoking is proportional to the risk of developing kidney cancer such that individuals who smoke for many years and are heavy smokers have a greater risk of developing kidney cancer. Furthermore, with increased use of cigarettes, the risk of developing more advanced disease is greater. This results in lower cure rates for patients with kidney cancer who are smokers.

Smoking has been linked to many medical diseases as well as many cancers including urologic cancers. We strongly encourage all of our smoking patients to seek smoking cessation counseling with their primary care provider.