

# Shedding Light on Bladder Cancer Pro Golfer's Diagnosis Puts Face on Deadly Disease

by Paul Arco

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Professional golfer John Daly made a startling announcement on September 10, revealing that he had been diagnosed with bladder cancer. One of the most recognizable names on the PGA Tour, the 54-year-old Daly isn't alone in his fight with bladder cancer. But his popularity could lend a face to a cancer that is not often talked about.

“There are about 80,000 new cases that have occurred in the United States, and this is the ninth most common malignancy in the whole world,” said Dr. Ismael Shaukat, hematologist oncologist, OSF HealthCare. “Unfortunately the incidence is rising.”

Bladder cancer occurs mostly in older people. According to the American Cancer Society, about 9 out of 10 people with this cancer are over the age of 55 with the average age of diagnosis 73. Men are nearly four times as likely as women to develop bladder cancer. If you smoke, those numbers go up.

“Risk factors for bladder cancer include smoking, which is the greatest risk factor we see in our population,” said Dr. Ismael Shaukat, hematologist oncologist, OSF HealthCare. “It affects the lining of the bladder. We see a lot of patients come in because of this because they have a heavy history of smoking.”

Smokers, like Daly, are three times more likely to get bladder cancer than non-smokers. But there are other risk factors as well, including chemical exposure which could impact people who work in industries that produce rubber, leather, textiles and paint products.

Blood in the urine is the most common symptom of bladder cancer. Other symptoms include frequent urination, pain while urinating and lower back pain.

“A lot of times patients notice they are bleeding but have no pain associated with it,” said Dr. Ismael Shaukat, hematologist oncologist, OSF HealthCare. “Sometimes it can be associated with a simple urinary tract infection known as a UTI. But if patients notice an increase in bleeding known as ‘frank bleeding,’ then they should go to their primary care physician for further evaluation.”

If cancer is the diagnosis, there are three main treatment options: surgery, chemotherapy with radiation therapy and immunotherapy, which stimulates the body’s own immune system to remove cancerous cells.

According to Dr. Shaukat, there are steps people can take to help prevent bladder cancer, including maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, drinking proper amounts of water and, of course, not smoking.

“There are two things I want to convey,” said Dr. Ismael Shaukat, hematologist oncologist, OSF HealthCare. “Number one is early detection. Once you see something please do not ignore it. Number two is smoking cessation. I can’t say this enough. It’s not just for bladder cancer, but it’s for a slew of other carcinomas that can occur because of this.”