



Glossary of terms

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... 0-9 [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

A

Abacterial cystitis

Inflammation of the bladder of uncertain cause in the absence of any infection with bacteria

Active monitoring

A term referring to close monitoring of a condition (usually prostate cancer) without any treatment intervention

Adenocarcinoma

A cancerous tumour developing from the glandular component of any organ (particularly the prostate or kidney)

Alpha-blocker

A drug which relaxes the muscle of the bladder neck & prostate to improve symptoms of urinary obstruction; also used to relax the ureter and encourage the passage of stones

Amino-aciduria [See: Cystinuria](#)

Analgesic

A drug used to relieve pain

Angiomyolipoma

A benign tumour of the kidney which arises from blood vessels and fat; it may, if it grows large enough, rupture and cause bleeding into or around the kidney

Antiandrogen

A drug used to block the effects of the male hormone (testosterone) often used in the treatment of prostate cancer

Antibiotic

A drug belonging to a large group of agents used to eradicate bacterial infection

Anti-inflammatory (NSAID)

A drug which reduces inflammation and helps to relieve pain; often used to treat prostatitis and the pain of kidney stones

Assisted conception

Fertility treatment utilising sperm retrieval and preparation by artificial insemination (AI), in vitro fertilisation (IVF), sperm microinjection (ICSI) or transfer of a fertilised egg to the Fallopian tube (GIFT)

[Assisted conception: More information](#)

Azoospermia

The complete absence of sperms in ejaculated semen; one cause of male-factor infertility. Usually due to failure of production of sperms by the testis or to obstruction of the tubing along which sperms normally pass

[Azoospermia: More information](#)

B

Balanitis

Inflammation of the foreskin or the tip of the penis

Balanitis xerotica obliterans (BXO)

A scarring disease of the foreskin, of unknown cause, which results in a tight foreskin

BCG [See: Immunotherapy](#)

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)

Benign enlargement of the prostate gland, invariably seen with increasing age

[Benign prostatic hyperplasia \(BPH\): More information](#)

Biopsy

A tissue sample taken from any organ or part of the body to ascertain whether any abnormality is present

Bladder

The midline, lower abdominal organ which stores urine prior to its expulsion via the urethra

Bladder cancer (TCC)

A tumour which develops in the internal lining of the bladder wall; usually a malignant transitional cell carcinoma

Bladder instability [See: Overactive bladder](#)

Bladder training

A technique whereby the patient learns to resist the urge to urinate by passing urine according to a strict, timed schedule

Brachytherapy

A type of radiotherapy where radioactive seeds are implanted directly into an organ, usually the prostate gland

C

Calcium oxalate

The commonest constituent of kidney stones and the type of stone which is most prone to recur

Calculus

A stone, usually in the kidney or ureter, but may also occur in the prostate or bladder

Calyx

The outermost part of the collecting system of the kidney where urine is first released for excretion

Castration (medical)

The use of drugs to antagonise the male or female hormones, having the same effect as surgical removal of the testicles or ovaries

Castration (surgical)

Removal of both testicles (in men) or ovaries (in women)

Catheter

A rubberised or silicone tube passed into a hollow organ (usually the bladder) to drain its contents

Chemotherapy

The use of drugs to treat cancer

Chordee

A deformity of the penis which results in a bending on erection

Chronic retention of urine [See: Overflow incontinence](#)

Circumcision

Surgical removal of the foreskin, usually performed for phimosis

Computerised tomography (CT)

A form of X-ray where slices are taken through the body to produce images at different levels

Corpora cavernosa

The two erectile cylinders running along the length of the penis which fill with blood during erection

Creatinine

A waste product filtered from the blood by the kidneys and expelled in the urine

Cryotherapy

Destruction of a tissue or organ by freezing to a very low temperature

Cystectomy

Surgical removal of the bladder, usually for invasive cancer

Cystinuria

An inherited disorder of metabolism which results in high levels of the amino acid cystine in the urine and leads to formation of cystine stones
[Cystinuria: More information](#)

Cystitis

Inflammation of the internal lining of the bladder

Cystocele

Prolapse of the bladder into the vagina

Cystogram

An X-ray of the bladder where dye is inserted into the bladder using a catheter

Cystometrogram (CMG)

A technique for assessing bladder function by filling the bladder with fluid or gas and measuring the pressure inside the bladder during filling

Cystoscopy

Inspection of the bladder using a telescope (either flexible or rigid) with an attached light source to illuminate the interior of the bladder

Cytology

The study of individual cells, usually in the urine, to identify malignancy or other disorders

D

Detrusor muscle

The interlocking fibres which form the muscle of the bladder wall

Dialysis [See: Haemodialysis](#)

Digital rectal examination (DRE, PR)

Examination of the back passage with a gloved finger, usually to feel the prostate gland

Dilatation

Stretching or widening of an opening, usually the urethra or neck of the bladder

Dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO)

A chemical solution instilled into the bladder to help painful bladder conditions such as interstitial (abacterial) cystitis

Diverticulum

An abnormal pouch leading off the cavity of a hollow organ; most commonly seen in the bladder

Dribbling

Leakage after the normal passage of urine due to either obstruction (prostate or stricture) or to an abnormal outpouching of the urethra (diverticulum)

Dysuria

Painful passage of urine

E

Ectopic

Lying in the wrong place as a result of an inherited abnormality; can apply to any structure in the body but most commonly seen with testicles and kidneys

Embolisation

Blocking the artery to an organ by introducing foam, coils or gel under X-ray control using a small catheter placed in the artery

Endourology

A generic term for inspection of the internal lining of organs of the urinary tract using a telescope and an illuminating light source

Enterocoele

Prolapse of the small or large bowel into the back part of the vagina

Enuresis

Incontinence of urine at night usually considered synonymous with bedwetting

Epididymis

The sperm-carrying mechanism lying behind the testis which carries sperms from the testis to the vas deferens during ejaculation

Epididymitis (epididymo-orchitis)

Inflammation/infection of the epididymis, often involving the testis as well (epididymo-orchitis)

Erectile deformity [See: Peyronie's disease](#)

Erectile dysfunction (MED)

Impotence: the inability to obtain or maintain an erection sufficient for penetration and the satisfaction of both sexual partners

Erection

The complex process of hardening & enlargement of the penis as a result of sexual stimulation

Exstrophy

A congenital condition where the bladder remains on the surface of the lower abdomen open to the outside

Extracorporeal shockwave lithotripsy (ESWL)

Shockwaves generated in water, focussed and fired through the body to fragment stones in the kidney or ureter

Extravasation

Leakage of urine or surgical irrigation fluid outside the urinary tract

F

Fournier's gangrene

A life-threatening infection, usually of the genital region, resulting in death of tissue and profound collapse (due to the toxins released by the dead tissue)

Frenulum

The thin bridge of skin on the under-surface of the penis joining the head of the penis to the inside of the foreskin

Frequency

Passing urine too often, usually during the day

G

Gleason grade

A method of scoring the aggressiveness of prostate cancer by assessing the pathological appearance of the tumour under a microscope

Green light laser (PVP)

A technique for relieving prostatic obstruction using a KTP (potassium titanyl phosphate) laser which emits visible, green light

H

Haematospermia (haemospermia)

Blood in the semen during ejaculation

Haematuria

Blood in the urine

Haemodialysis

Filtration of the blood using an external machine to remove harmful waste products in patients whose own kidneys have failed

Hesitancy

Having to wait an abnormally long time for the flow of urine to start

High Intensity Focussed Ultrasound (HIFU)

The use of high-energy, focused sound waves to destroy abnormal tissues or organs, currently only used experimentally on the prostate & kidney

High-Dependency Unit (HDU)

A ward area where intermediate care is provided for patients who require more careful monitoring than is available on a normal ward

Histology

The science of assessing tissue under a microscope to determine whether any abnormality is present

Histopathology [See: Histology](#)

Horseshoe kidney

A rare, congenital abnormality where the two kidneys are joined together across the midline to form an inverted horseshoe

Hydrocele

An abnormal collection of fluid in the naturally-occurring sac which surrounds the testicle

Hydronephrosis

Distension of the kidney due to obstruction, reflux or a congenital abnormality

Hypospadias

A congenital abnormality of the penis where the urethra (urinary orifice) does not open at the tip of the penis; often associated with a downward bending of the penis (chordee)

I

Immunotherapy

Treatment of cancer by stimulating the natural immune response, usually with BCG (Bacille Calmette Guerin)

Impotence [See: Erectile dysfunction](#)

In vitro fertilisation (IVF) [See: Assisted conception](#)

Incontinence

Involuntary leakage of urine

Infertility

Inability of a couple to produce a pregnancy following a minimum of 1 year of trying without contraceptive precautions

Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU, ICU)

A ward area where advanced life-support measures can be given to critically-ill patients before or after surgery

International Index of Erectile Function (IIEF)

A symptom score to determine the severity of erectile & ejaculatory function and their impact on quality of life

International prostate symptom score (I-PSS) [See: Symptom score](#)

Interstitial cystitis [See: Abacterial cystitis](#)

Intravenous urogram (IVU)

An X-ray of the kidneys, ureters and bladder performed using an injection of dye into a vein in the arm

Irrigation

The use of saline or other bottled fluids to keep the bladder clear of clotting blood before, during or after surgery

J

Juxta-glomerular apparatus (JGA)

A specialised cluster of blood vessels which secretes hormones that govern blood pressure & salt balance in the body

K

Kidney

One of two paired organs (normally) which lie at the back of the abdomen, in front of the lower ribs, and filter the blood to produce urine

Kidney cancer (renal cancer)

A tumour arising from the kidney, usually an adenocarcinoma

Kidney transplant [See: Transplantation](#)

L

Laparoscope

A telescope with a light source and camera attached which is inserted into the abdominal cavity (through a small incision) to perform 'keyhole' surgery

Laser

Light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation; an energy source for performing some types of urological surgery

Litholapaxy

Crushing of a stone, usually in the bladder, to reduce it to fragments small enough to be passed spontaneously or removed through an endoscope

Lithotripsy

Wearing away of a stone; usually synonymous with ESWL

Lymphadenectomy (lymph node dissection)

Surgical removal of lymph nodes to determine whether they are involved with cancer

M

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

A means of producing cross-sectional images of the body to characterise tissues by the way the electrons in the tissue move in response to a strong magnetic field

Metastasis

A secondary tumour (remote from the original cancer) which has arisen by spread through the blood, the lymph system or by direct invasion

Micturition [See: Voiding](#)

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

A group of clinicians, from all specialities involved in care of a particular condition, who combine to discuss individual patient problems and to recommend treatment plans for each patient

N

Nd-YAG [See: Yttrium Aluminium Garnet](#)

Necrotising fasciitis [See: Fournier's gangrene](#)

Nephroblastoma [See: Wilm's tumour](#)

Nephron

The microscopic filtering unit in the kidney which filters water and waste products from the blood

Nocturia

Abnormal passage of urine at night

Non-Seminomatous Germ Cell Tumour (NSGCT) [See: Teratoma](#)

Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) [See: Magnetic resonance imaging](#)

O

Orchidectomy

The surgical removal of one or both testicles

Orchitis

Inflammation (or infection) of a testicle

Overactive bladder (OAB)

A condition caused by involuntary bladder contractions during filling which cannot be suppressed

Overflow incontinence

Leakage of urine from a bladder which is permanently full

P

Paraphimosis

Retraction of a tight foreskin which becomes "stuck" due to an inability to return it to its original position covering the head of the penis

Percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL)

Puncture of the kidney through a small incision in the flank with passage of a telescope into the kidney which is used to visualise, fragment and extract stones

Peritoneal dialysis (PD)

Removal of waste products from patients with kidney failure by washout of the abdominal (peritoneal) cavity through a specially-inserted catheter

Peyronie's disease

A plaque (hardened area) that forms in the penis preventing that area from stretching and resulting in bending, indentation ("waisting") or shortening of the penis

Phimosis

Tightness of the foreskin, either due to a scarring disease or as a result of a congenital abnormality

Photoselective vaporisation of prostate (PVP) [See: Green light laser](#)

Plasma cell balanitis [See: Zoon's balanitis](#)

Polydipsia

Excessive thirst which causes the patient to drink large amounts of fluid

Polyuria

Over-production of urine, usually at night; often occurs in the elderly due to poor water handling ability with increasing age

Positron emission tomography (PET)

A scanning technique, occasionally used to assess the spread of cancer, which combines radio-isotope scanning with CT or MRI

Priapism

A persistent, painful erection which occurs without sexual stimulation

Prostate

A chestnut-sized organ lying at the bottom of the bladder which produces chemicals to nourish sperms and facilitate their transport to the female uterus

Prostatectomy

Removal of the prostate gland by telescopic or open surgery

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA)

A chemical released into the bloodstream by the prostate gland which may be raised in men with prostate cancer

Prostatitis

Infection or inflammation of the prostate gland

Prosthesis

An artificial implant used to replace any part of the body (e.g. a testicle)

Pyelitis [See: Pyelonephritis](#)

Pyelonephritis

Inflammation of the kidney, usually as a result of bacterial infection

Q

Quality of Life Score (QoL)

A means of assessing the impact of symptoms on the overall day-to-day activities of patients

R

Radiofrequency ablation

Destruction of an organ or tissue using inserted needles which produce microwave-type energy

Radio-isotope scanning (nuclear medicine imaging)

The use of low-dose, radioactive agents injected into the body to demonstrate structure and function of tissues or organs

Rectocele [See: Enterocoele](#)

Renal colic

Intermittent, excruciating pain produced by the passage of a stone from the kidney downwards towards the bladder

S

Scintigraphy [See: Radio-isotope scanning](#)

Seminal vesicle

One of a pair of sacs lying behind the prostate gland which store seminal fluid and sperms in preparation for ejaculation

Seminoma

One of the two commonest forms of testicular cancer

Shunt [See: Vascular Access](#)

Sling

An artificial or natural material inserted, usually around the urethra, to resolve urinary incontinence

Sphincter

A muscular, valve mechanism which prevents outflow from any organ in the body (e.g. bladder, bile ducts, rectum)

Spina bifida

A congenital defect in the bones of the spinal column, often affecting the spinal cord, resulting in neurological defects in the lower part of the body

Stent

A small tube or splint inserted to keep a tube or blood vessel open

Sterility [See: Infertility](#)

Stress incontinence

The involuntary leakage of urine during periods of raised abdominal pressure, usually during coughing, sneezing, laughing or lifting heavy objects

Stricture

Abnormal scarring or narrowing of a hollow tube

Struvite (triple phosphate)

A type of kidney stone, usually caused by infection and often occurring in women, consisting of calcium, magnesium & ammonium phosphate

Symptom score

A simple questionnaire to determine the severity of a patient's symptoms

T

Teratoma (NSGCT)

One of the two commonest forms of testicular cancer

Testicular cancer

One of commonest tumours in young men; usually a seminoma or teratoma

Testosterone

The main male hormone produced mainly by the testicles (but also, in small amounts, by the adrenal glands)

Thermotherapy

Destruction of an organ or tissue by heating to a high temperature

TNM

A staging system for cancer which describes the extent of the primary tumour (T), the lymph nodes (N) and metastases (M)

Transitional cell carcinoma

A malignant (cancerous) tumour arising from the internal lining of the urinary tract

Transplantation

Surgical implantation of a donated organ to replace one which has failed to work effectively

Transurethral resection (TUR)

Usually of the prostate gland (TURP) or of a tumour in the bladder (TURBT)

Trial without catheter (TWOC)

Removal of a catheter from the bladder to re-establish normal passage of urine

Tumescence [See: Erection](#)

TWOC [See: Trial without catheter](#)

U

Ultrasound (U/S)

High-frequency sound waves used to reflect off tissues to determine their nature

Urachus

A communication between the umbilicus and the top of the bladder which normally closes before birth but may persist abnormally into later life

Ureter

The thin, muscular tube which propels urine down from the kidneys to the bladder

Ureteric colic [See: Renal colic](#)

Ureteroscopy (URS)

Inspection of the ureter (and/or kidney) using a telescope (either flexible or rigid) with an attached light source passed into the bladder and up the ureter towards the kidney

Urethra

The tube through which urine passes to the outside of the body from the bladder

Urgency

A sudden, irresistible desire to pass urine

Uric acid (urate)

A chemical, eliminated in the urine, whose levels can build up in the body (to produce gout) or in the kidneys (to produce stones)

Urodynamics [See: Cystometrogram](#)

V

Varicocele

An abnormal collection of varicose veins above the testicle, usually on the left side

Vas deferens

A muscular tube which carries sperm from the epididymis into the urethra during ejaculation of semen

Vascular Access

A means of connecting an artery to a vein (either in the arm or leg) to allow the vein to be used for haemodialysis

Vasography

An X-ray examination performed through the vas deferens to establish the presence or absence of obstruction in the tubing

Voiding

Passing urine

Von Hippel Lindau disease (VHL)

A rare, inherited condition causing tumours and cysts in the retina, brain and kidneys

W

Washouts [See: Irrigation](#)

Watchful waiting [See: Active monitoring](#)

Wilm's tumour

A form of kidney cancer occurring predominantly in children

X

- X-ray
A picture taken using non-visible wavelengths of light to produce images of parts of the body

Y

- Yttrium Aluminium Garnet (YAG)
A type of laser energy produced by generating laser light in a neodymium-yttrium aluminium garnet (YAG) crystal

Z

- Zoon's balanitis (plasma cell balanitis)
A type of inflammation of the foreskin and penis, only seen in the uncircumcised, characterised by dense infiltration of the tissues with plasma cells

About BAUS

- [Data & Audit Project](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [Find us](#)
- [Governance](#)
- [Our history](#)
- [Joining BAUS](#)
- [Journals](#)
- [Medals & Awards](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Our staff](#)
- [Workforce](#)
- [Working for BAUS](#)

Updates

- [Presidents briefing](#)
- [News](#)
- [Elections](#)
- [BAUS 2012](#)

Sections

- [Academic Urology](#)
- [Andrology & Genito-Urethral Surgery](#)
- [Endourology](#)
- [Female Neurological & Urodynamic Urology](#)
- [Oncology](#)
- [Virtual Museum](#)

Regions

- [East Midlands](#)
- [Scotland East](#)
- [East of England](#)
- [Scotland West](#)
- [Irish Republic](#)
- [South Central](#)
- [London North](#)
- [South East Coast](#)
- [London South](#)
- [South West](#)
- [North East](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [North West](#)
- [West Midlands](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Yorks & Humber](#)

Education & Training

- [Office of Education](#)
- [Career path of a Urologist](#)
- [CPD](#)
- [Revalidation](#)
- [SAC in Urology](#)
- [SURG](#)

Patients

- [Urology is ...](#)

- [Glossary](#)
- [I think I might have...](#)
- [I'm told I need ...](#)
- [Your patient journey](#)
- [Who's who in surgery](#)

Urolink

- [About](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Link Centres](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Visits](#)
- [Working abroad](#)
- [Working with Urolink](#)