



7 Stool and Urine Symptoms in Pancreatic Cancer: What They Mean and When to Get Help



Written by Nicole Schmidt, Alina Sharon | Medically Reviewed by Zilpah Sheikh, MD and Elmer Huerta, MD, MPH on July 15, 2026

What Poop and Pee Changes Can Tell You About Pancreatic Cancer

Pancreatic cancer can change how your body digests food and handles fluid. This can affect how your poop and pee look or smell. If you or a loved one with pancreatic cancer notice new or worsening changes in your poop or pee, talk to your doctor. Knowing what these changes mean can help you decide together what to manage at home and when to get medical help.

Peeing a Lot or Sweet-Smelling Pee

A tumor can cause you to pee more often if it upsets how the pancreas controls blood sugar. In 4 in 5 pancreatic cancer cases, sugar levels rise and sometimes trigger diabetes. When this happens, your pee may also smell sweet from the extra sugar your body flushes out. To manage this:

- Cut back on sugary foods and drinks to help manage blood sugar.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine to ease bladder irritation.
- Try Kegel exercises to train your bladder to hold pee longer.
- Ask your doctor if you also need blood sugar medication.



Constipation

Constipation makes it hard to poop. It affects about 3 in 5 people with pancreatic cancer and can stem from not drinking enough water, changes in your diet or activity, or side effects of cancer treatment or pain medication. Eating more fiber, like vegetables and whole grains, or taking a gentle stool softener can help. If you're pooping three times a week or less, or not at all, call your doctor. You could have a blocked bowel, which needs urgent care.

Dark Pee

Pee can turn dark in over half of pancreatic cancer cases. This happens when a tumor blocks the bile duct, and bile can't drain, backing up into your blood. Some chemotherapy (chemo) drugs can also darken your pee by making you lose too much fluid (dehydration) or causing liver problems. Drinking more water can help, but if your pee stays dark, tell your doctor. They may place a small tube (a stent) to reopen the bile duct, or check if they need to change the chemo that's stressing your liver.

Diarrhea

Loose poop (diarrhea) can happen in more than half of people with pancreatic cancer, depending on the cause. The cancer can make food hard to digest, but infection or chemo can also be causes. To ease mild diarrhea, eat bland foods such as bananas, rice, applesauce, or toast. You can also take over-the-counter (OTC) medicine like loperamide (Imodium A-D). If diarrhea lasts more than a few days, call your doctor. You may need enzyme replacement pills or antibiotics.

Pale Poop

Pancreatic cancer can make it hard for the pancreas to digest fat. This causes pale, greasy poop (steatorrhea) in up to half of people with advanced pancreatic cancer. To manage it, try to eat every three hours and drink water. Limit stomach irritants like alcohol, fried or fatty foods, and raw vegetables. Call your doctor if your pale poop comes with dark pee or with symptoms of jaundice like itchy skin or the yellowing of your skin and eyes. This can signal a blocked bile duct.

Foamy Pee

Foamy pee happens when protein builds up in your pee (proteinuria). It's usually a mild side effect of some pancreatic cancer chemo drugs in as many as half of people who take them. But foamy pee can also come from diabetes or kidney disease, so if it lasts more than a few days, call your doctor. Mention any swelling in your legs or feet, and ask if OTC painkillers are safe, as some can stress your kidneys.

Bloody Pee

Some chemo drugs can irritate the bladder, leaving blood in your pee (hematuria). The amount is often too small to see, but your pee may look pink or red. Drinking more water can help protect your bladder. But bloody pee can also come from a urinary tract infection (UTI) or a kidney stone. Call your doctor if you can't pee or if you notice:

- Heavy bleeding or blood clots in your pee
- Strong pain in your back, side, or lower belly
- Fever or chills
- Confusion or dizziness

Sources



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