

Blood in the urine (hematuria): causes and when to get checked

Blood in the urine means bleeding entered the urinary tract somewhere between the kidneys and the urethra, and it deserves an explanation even if it stopped. Most causes are not cancer, but the evaluation is matched to your risk so that a treatable problem is not missed.

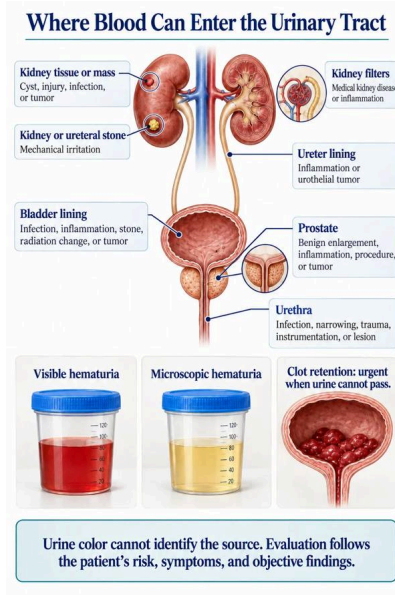


Figure 10.1. Where Blood Can Enter the Urinary Tract. Blood may enter urine anywhere from the kidney's filtering tissue to the urethra. The location and cause cannot be determined by urine color alone.

Key points

- The disappearance of blood tells you active bleeding stopped, not why it started.
- Painless bleeding is not necessarily reassuring; some conditions worth excluding cause no discomfort.
- A dipstick is a reason to look more carefully; microscopic examination confirms red blood cells.
- Blood thinners can reveal bleeding but do not explain its source, and should never be stopped on your own.
- Cystoscopy and upper-tract imaging answer complementary questions; one does not replace the other.
- Reassurance is most valuable when it follows an appropriate evaluation rather than replacing one.

Get prompt care if you notice

- Passing blood with severe lower abdominal pressure and inability to urinate (possible clot retention)
- Heavy ongoing bleeding with dizziness, fainting, chest discomfort, shortness of breath or profound weakness
- Blood with fever, chills, flank pain, vomiting or confusion
- Bleeding after trauma, during pregnancy, with a single kidney or after recent urinary surgery

Questions to ask your urologist

- Was the blood confirmed under the microscope or only by dipstick?
- Is my bleeding visible or microscopic, and how do my risk factors shape the next step?
- Do I need cystoscopy, upper-tract imaging, repeat urine testing or a combination?
- Could this be coming from the kidney filters, and should a nephrologist be involved?
- If infection is treated, when should my urine be rechecked?
- What should I do if I pass clots or cannot urinate?

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