SYMPTOM

Urine - bloody

Bloody urine looks pink, red, or brown, or contains blood found on a urine test.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE
Pink, red, or tea-coloured urine, sometimes with clots

WHERE IT IS FELT
Kidneys, bladder, and tubes carrying urine

MOST COMMON CAUSES
Urinary infection, kidney stones, enlarged prostate

WHEN IT IS URGENT
Blood with fever, severe side pain, or trouble urinating

USUALLY LASTS
Hours to days, depending on the underlying cause

SEE A DOCTOR IF
Any visible blood, even once or without pain

Overview

Blood in the urine is called haematuria . The blood may be easy to see, making urine look pink, red, or dark brown. Sometimes the urine looks normal, and blood is found only during a urine test. This is called microscopic haematuria.

The blood can come from anywhere in the urinary tract. This includes the kidneys, the tubes from the kidneys to the bladder, the bladder, and the tube that carries urine out of the body.

Bloody urine is a symptom, not a diagnosis. Many causes are treatable, such as a urinary tract infection or kidney stone. However, visible blood should always be medically assessed, even if it happens once, there is only a small amount, or you have no pain.

What it may feel or look like

A small amount of blood can noticeably change the colour of urine. It may look:

You may have no other symptoms. Painless blood still needs assessment.

Other symptoms can provide clues. Burning during urination, frequent urges, and lower abdominal discomfort may occur with an infection. A stone may cause intense pain in the side

or back that moves toward the groin. Kidney inflammation can cause swelling, high blood pressure, or dark, cola-coloured urine.

Red urine is not always blood. Beetroot, food colouring, some medicines, menstrual blood, and bleeding from the vagina or bowel can change what you see. If you are unsure where the colour came from, arrange a urine test.

- Light pink, bright red, rust-coloured, or tea-coloured
- Evenly discoloured or streaked with blood
- Cloudy or mixed with small clots

Common causes

Common explanations include urinary tract infections, kidney or bladder stones, and an enlarged prostate. The prostate is a gland below the bladder in men and can bleed as it grows larger with age.

Hard exercise can sometimes cause temporary blood in the urine. Recent urinary procedures, such as having a catheter placed, may also cause short-term bleeding. Menstrual blood may mix with a urine sample without coming from the urinary tract.

Less common but important causes include kidney inflammation, inherited kidney conditions, prostate inflammation, and growths in the kidney or bladder. Cancer is not the most likely explanation, but it is one reason that painless, visible, persistent, or repeated blood should not be ignored.

Blood-thinning medicines can make bleeding more noticeable. They should not automatically be assumed to be the only cause. Do not stop a prescribed blood thinner like warfarin or apixaban unless a healthcare professional tells you to do so.

Causes needing urgent assessment include a severe kidney infection, a urinary blockage caused by clots, and injury to the kidneys or bladder. These usually cause other warning signs, such as fever, severe pain, difficulty passing urine, or bleeding after a significant accident.

When to seek medical care

Arrange a prompt medical appointment for any visible blood in your urine, even if it happened once or has stopped. You should also book follow-up if a urine test found blood that cannot be explained by menstruation, recent strenuous exercise, or a temporary infection.

Seek same-day medical care if bloody urine occurs with:

Go to an emergency department if you cannot pass urine, especially if you are passing clots or your lower abdomen feels painfully full. Emergency care is also appropriate for heavy ongoing bleeding, fainting, marked weakness, or blood in the urine after a major injury.

- Fever, chills, vomiting, or feeling significantly unwell
- Severe pain in your side, back, abdomen, or groin
- Burning urination with worsening pain or frequent urges
- Pregnancy or a weakened immune system

How the cause is found

A healthcare professional will ask when the bleeding began, whether it is painful, and whether you have urinary symptoms, fever, recent injuries, or strenuous exercise. Tell them about medicines, including blood thinners, and whether the blood could be from menstruation or vaginal bleeding.

A urine test can confirm whether red blood cells are present. The sample may also be checked for bacteria, protein, or other signs of kidney disease. A urine culture may be used to identify a bacterial infection.

Blood tests can check kidney function and look for anaemia if bleeding has been substantial. Anaemia means there are too few healthy red blood cells.

Depending on your symptoms and medical history, you may need an ultrasound or CT scan to look at the kidneys and urinary tract. Some people need cystoscopy, in which a thin camera is passed through the urine opening to examine the bladder. Not everyone needs every test; the choice depends on factors such as age, smoking history, test results, and whether the bleeding returns.

Treatment and self-care

Treatment depends on where the blood comes from. A bacterial urinary infection may require antibiotics like amoxicillin or doxycycline . Stones may pass without a procedure, but larger or blocking stones may need specialist treatment. Kidney inflammation, prostate conditions, injuries, and bladder or kidney growths each require different care.

While waiting for assessment, note the urine colour, whether there are clots, and any pain, fever, or urinary difficulty. Drink your usual amount of fluid unless you have been told to restrict fluids. Drinking excessive amounts will not treat the underlying cause and may be

uncomfortable if urine flow is blocked.

Avoid strenuous exercise until the bleeding has been assessed or has clearly settled. Ask a pharmacist or healthcare professional before taking pain medicines if you have kidney problems, take blood thinners, or are bleeding heavily.

Do not use leftover antibiotics. They may not treat the cause and can affect the accuracy of infection testing.

What to expect

Blood caused by a simple infection or brief exercise-related irritation may settle within days once the trigger is treated or removed. Stones may cause symptoms that come and go. Other causes can lead to repeated or persistent bleeding.

The urine returning to its normal colour does not always mean the cause has resolved. Complete any recommended tests and follow-up.

If the first assessment does not find a cause, your clinician may recommend repeat urine testing or later review. The follow-up plan depends on whether the blood was visible, whether it returns, and your personal risk factors.

Common questions

Can a small amount of blood be ignored?

No. A small amount can strongly change urine colour, and the amount does not reliably show how serious the cause is. Arrange an assessment for any visible blood.

What if there is no pain?

Painless bleeding still needs evaluation. Infections and stones often cause discomfort, but several urinary conditions can cause blood without pain.

Could red food be responsible?

Beetroot, berries, and food dyes can change urine colour. Some medicines can also cause red or brown urine. If the colour persists, returns, contains clots, or you are unsure, have the urine tested.

Can a period affect the test?

Yes. Menstrual blood can contaminate a urine sample. Tell the person arranging the test. They may advise repeating it after your period, but visible blood that seems to come from the urine

still needs assessment.

Can exercise cause bloody urine?

Strenuous exercise can cause short-lived haematuria. Blood that does not clear, keeps returning, or occurs with pain or illness should not be assumed to be exercise-related.

Sources

- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: Hematuria (Blood in the Urine)
- American Urological Association and Society of Urodynamics, Female Pelvic Medicine & Urogenital Reconstruction: Microhematuria Guideline
- American College of Radiology: ACR Appropriateness Criteria - Hematuria
- NHS: Blood in urine
- MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia: Urine - bloody