

ASCO ANSWERS

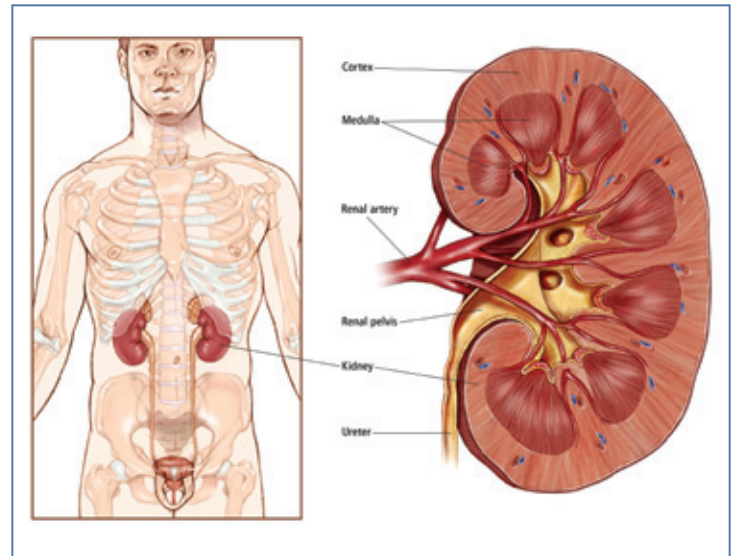
KIDNEY CANCER

WHAT IS KIDNEY CANCER?

Kidney cancer begins when cells in the kidney grow out of control and form a tumor. There are several types of kidney cancer; renal cell carcinoma is the most common. In addition, there are several types of kidney cancer cells. Knowing the tumor's cell type helps doctors plan treatment.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE KIDNEY?

The kidneys are reddish-brown, fist-sized organs located above the waist on either side of the spine. They filter blood and remove impurities, excess minerals and salts, and surplus water that leave the body as wastewater (urine). These organs also produce hormones to help control blood pressure, red blood cell production, and other functions. Because each kidney works independently, one kidney can be removed while preserving the function of the other.



Find additional cancer information at www.cancer.net.

WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing how much the cancer has spread. There are four stages for kidney cancer: stages I through IV (one through four). More information about these stages is available at www.cancer.net/kidney.

HOW IS KIDNEY CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of kidney cancer depends on the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the person's overall health. Kidney cancer is most often treated with surgery, targeted therapy, and/or immunotherapy. In situations when the tumor is small and growing slowly, the doctor may recommend active surveillance, which means that the patient is closely monitored and starts treatment only when there is evidence that the disease is worsening.

If the cancer has not spread beyond the kidneys, surgery to remove the tumor and part or all of the kidney may be the only necessary treatment. Radiation therapy and chemotherapy are occasionally used. Radiation therapy may also be used to relieve symptoms of cancer that has spread to other areas of the body. Patients with kidney cancer that has spread often receive multiple lines of therapy (treatments given one after another). When making treatment decisions, people may also consider a clinical trial; talk with your doctor about all treatment options. The side effects of kidney cancer treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your health care team.

HOW CAN I COPE WITH KIDNEY CANCER?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your doctor are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, becoming organized, and considering a second opinion are other steps. Take care of yourself during this time. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your health care. Consider asking the following questions of your doctors:

- What type of kidney cancer do I have? What type of cell is involved?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What stage is the kidney cancer?
- Would you explain my treatment options? What clinical trials are open to me?
- Who will be part of my treatment team, and what does each member do?
- How will this treatment plan benefit me?
- How will each treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children?



Learn more about
kidney cancer

- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/kidney.

Cancer.Net™

Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO®

For more information, visit ASCO's patient website, www.cancer.net, or call 888-651-3038.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Benign:

A tumor that is not cancerous

Biopsy:

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

Chemotherapy:

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

Immunotherapy:

Treatment that uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer

Lymph node:

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

Malignant:

A tumor that is cancerous

Metastasis:

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

Nephrectomy:

Part or total removal of a kidney

Oncologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer

Prognosis:

Chance of recovery

Radiation therapy:

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

Targeted therapy:

Treatment that targets specific genes or proteins that contribute to cancer growth

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue