

# Kidney Cancer

## What to look for...

- Reddish or cloudy urine.
- Dull pain in the abdomen, back, or side.
- A mass or lump in the lower back that feels smooth and firm but does not necessarily hurt.
- Intermittent fever, vomiting, appetite and weight loss.

The kidneys are a pair of organs positioned above the waist on either side of the spine. The outer portion of each kidney cleanses the blood and produce urine. Benign cysts often develop in this area; much less often, a malignant tumour forms.

Renal cell carcinoma, the most common type of adult kidney cancer, starts in a kidney's outer portion. Transitional cell carcinoma, originates in the interior of the kidney, where urine collects. Cancer cells may eventually spread to other organs.

## Causes

Kidney cancer is strongly linked with a number of other health problems.

- Congenital defects of the kidney or bladder
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- [Kidney disease](#) requiring long-term dialysis
- Von Hippel-Lindau disease.
- Smokers more likely to develop kidney cancer
- Exposure to industrial agents
- Diets high in fat and protein
- [Obesity](#).

If your doctor detects a mass in the abdominal or kidney region or using a stethoscope hears an unusual noise over the renal artery, he will check for kidney cancer.

## Traditional Treatments

If it is caught early, a kidney tumour will be removed surgically. The surgeon tries to remove only the cancerous area but may have to take out the entire kidney along with surrounding fat, lymph nodes, and possibly the adrenal gland.

Radiation therapy and chemotherapy can reduce tumour size but are not consistently effective in preventing the spread of kidney cancer.

Unfortunately, neither radiation nor chemotherapy is particularly successful in treating advanced kidney cancer.

New therapies are being tested constantly in the hope of improving cure rates for this and other cancers.

When patients reach remission stage, they must be checked regularly for recurrence or complications.

(See Cancer for more information about therapies.)

### **Prevention**

Stop smoking immediately. Maintain your ideal weight and limit high-fat foods, and red meat. Always toss out foods that become mouldy or rancid, including nuts, seeds, or rice.

### **When to seek further professional advice**

- You experience any symptoms of kidney cancer.