

KIDNEY INFECTION, CHRONIC

(Chronic Pyelonephritis)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Infection of the kidneys that develops slowly and lasts for months or years. It leads to scarring and eventual loss of kidney function. Kidneys filter waste material from the bloodstream and produce urine. Kidney failure can affect adults of both sexes, but is more common in women.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Usually no signs or symptoms, unlike acute kidney infections. The following occur if chronic kidney failure develops:

- Anemia.
- Weakness.
- Loss of appetite.
- Hypertension.
- Pain in one or both sides of the lower back.
- Protein and blood in the urine.

CAUSES

- Frequent, acute bacterial kidney infections.
- Untreated lower urinary tract infections.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- History of diabetes mellitus.
- Urinary obstruction, such as stones or tumors.
- Long-term use of catheters.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Obtain prompt medical treatment for acute kidney infections, including 2 or more weeks of antibiotic treatment. Don't discontinue prescribed medication, even if symptoms disappear after a few days of treatment.
- Obtain treatment for any abnormality of the urinary tract that causes infection.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Symptoms can be controlled with treatment. If only one kidney is chronically infected and antibiotic treatment is unsuccessful, surgical removal of the affected kidney may prevent complications.
- If chronic kidney failure develops in both kidneys, a kidney transplant or kidney dialysis can be lifesaving.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Kidney-caused hypertension.
- Chronic kidney failure.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- For diagnosis, urinalysis and urine culture; cystoscopy (visual examination of the inside of the urinary bladder by means of a cystoscope, a slender optical instrument with a lighted tip); ultrasound; and intravenous pyelogram (IVP) (method of studying the kidneys and urinary tract by injecting a medication into the bloodstream that X-rays can detect). Other special tests may be recommended.
- Follow your treatment plan carefully. This may not be easy for an illness that causes few symptoms in the early stages.
- Surgery to relieve obstruction in the urinary tract, if one exists.
- Additional information available from the National Kidney & Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse, Box NKUDIC, Bethesda, MD 20893, (301) 468-6345 or call the American Kidney Fund (800) 638-8299.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics for months or years.
- Drugs to keep the urine slightly acid.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet. Drink 2 quarts of liquid daily; include cranberry juice to acidify the urine.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of chronic kidney infection.
- You or a family member has symptoms of an acute kidney infection, such as urgent, frequent or burning urination; fever and chills; fatigue; and cloudy urine.