

Kidney cancer: diagnosis and management

Information for the public
Published: 19 March 2026

www.nice.org.uk

Kidney cancer: the care you should expect

Kidney cancer, sometimes called renal cancer, is the 6th most common cancer in adults in the UK. It can be cured if found early, but diagnosis is challenging because most people do not have symptoms at early stages.

The most common management options for kidney cancer are:

- surgery to remove part or all of the kidney
- active surveillance (a set schedule of scans to monitor the tumour over time)
- ablation (sending extreme cold or heat through a needle to the tumour to destroy the cancer cells)
- radiation (sending radiation beams to the tumour to destroy the cancer cells).

There are also medicines for preventing cancer from returning after initial treatment and for treating more advanced kidney cancer.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with kidney cancer, including those who have kidney cancer because of an inherited condition that increases their risk, by making sure:

- healthcare professionals know how to diagnose kidney cancer quickly and in the least invasive way possible
- healthcare professionals know which treatments work best for different stages of kidney cancer
- people with kidney cancer are fully informed about treatment options and involved in treatment decisions
- people with kidney cancer get care and treatment that is tailored to their unique needs
- people with kidney cancer, and the people important to them, get the information and support they need.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment or care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment or care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

Your healthcare professional should provide information that is:

- relevant to your unique clinical and personal circumstances
- balanced, accurate and up to date
- tailored to any accessibility needs you may have and delivered in a sensitive way
- available when needed and on an ongoing basis.

Your healthcare professional should discuss the following with you at appropriate times based on your clinical and personal circumstances:

- the diagnosis process and how long it is likely to take
- the possibility of genetic testing for an inherited condition that increases the risk of developing kidney cancer
- the cancer's type, stage (size, location and spread) and grade (how different the cancer cells look compared to healthy cells)
- your likely prognosis (how the cancer might behave, how likely it is to be cured or controlled, and long-term survival) and how it might impact your life (including work and caring responsibilities)
- the symptoms you have and how these can be managed
- all management options (including follow-up) and the benefits and risks of each
- how to manage treatment side effects to maximise wellbeing
- an overview of the care plan, including what will happen and when, and how this could change
- the option to bring a family member, friend or carer to appointments
- how to find reliable information and support, including emotional and financial support.

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about kidney cancer.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Action Kidney Cancer](#), 0800 121 8721
- [Cancer Research UK](#), 0808 800 4040
- [Kidney Cancer UK](#), 0800 002 9002
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#), 0808 808 0000
- [VHL UK/Ireland](#), support@vhl-uk-ireland.org

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by kidney cancer and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-9336-9