Learn more about Chesapeake Urology and the diagnosis and treatment of kidney cancer by visiting www.chesapeakeurology.com or call 877-422-8237 to schedule an appointment with a urologist.
What is Kidney Cancer?

Kidney cancers generally fall into two categories: renal cell carcinoma (RCC) and urothelial (transitional cell) carcinoma (UC). Renal cell carcinoma is the most common type of adult kidney cancer and is a mass that grows in the urine producing portion of the kidney. It is more common than urothelial carcinoma of the renal pelvis, the part of the kidney that collects the urine. Affecting about 32,000 Americans each year, this cancer usually responds well to treatment when caught early.

Superior Care for Renal Cell Carcinoma

When it comes to kidney cancer, Chesapeake Urology offers the most advanced technology and techniques for diagnosis and treatment you expect, coupled with the most personalized, compassionate and comprehensive care you deserve. For patients diagnosed with kidney cancer, Chesapeake Urology’s specialists work with you every step of the way, informing you of your options and providing care that ensures the best possible outcome.
Risk Factors for Renal Cell Carcinoma

The more common risk factors associated with renal cell carcinoma are:

- Smoking
- Age, sex and race - being older than 60, male or African American puts you at higher risk
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- Family history
- Long term hemodialysis
- Certain genetic disorders such as Von Hippel-Lindau disease

Symptoms of Renal Cell Carcinoma

Early renal cell carcinoma often has no symptoms and may be found by chance during a CT scan, ultrasound, or an MRI scan where kidney cancers are found incidentally. The symptoms of more advanced RCC include:

- Blood in your urine (hematuria)
- Mass or lump in your abdominal area
- Pain in your side, flank or lower back
- Swelling in your legs and ankles
- Late symptoms include anemia (low blood count), persistent fatigue and rapid weight loss

It is important to note that a number of these symptoms can also be caused by other medical conditions. For this reason, it is important that you speak to your doctor about any symptoms you may experience and have annual physical exams to maintain your good health.

Kidney cancer is among the 10 most common cancers in both men and women. Overall, the lifetime risk for developing kidney cancer is about 1 in 63 (1.6%).
Diagnosing Kidney Cancer

To make the most accurate diagnosis, your urologist will perform a complete physical examination, talk to you about your medical history and ask questions about your lifestyle and symptoms including:

- Do you smoke?
- What symptoms are you experiencing?
- When did you first notice these symptoms?
- Do your symptoms come and go or are they constant?
- How severe are your symptoms?
- Do you have a family history of kidney cancer?

Your doctor may also order additional imaging and lab tests, including:

- CT Scan, MRI or ultrasound
- Urinalysis
- Blood tests
- X-ray or bone scan
- Needle biopsy of kidney mass

A Diagnosis of Kidney Cancer – Now what?

If your doctor has diagnosed kidney cancer, he or she will sit with you and explain the next steps, including treatment. Your urologist and the cancer care team at Chesapeake Urology understand that a diagnosis of cancer is a scary and emotional time for you and your loved ones and will take the time to explain your options and answer any questions you may have.

Staging Kidney Cancer

Upon diagnosis, your doctor will assign your kidney cancer to one of four stages that describe how advanced and how aggressive the cancer is. Earlier stages have a better prognosis with treatment. Staging is based on the size of the kidney mass, its location and whether or not the cancer has invaded surrounding tissues or structures. Staging the cancer will also help your doctor determine the best approach to your treatment.

**STAGE 1:** The tumor is less than or equal to 7 centimeters and is confined to the kidney

**STAGE 2:** The tumor is larger than 7 centimeters but still confined to the kidney

**STAGE 3:** The tumor invades organs adjacent to the kidney

**STAGE 4:** The tumor has spread more extensively (liver, lungs, bone and/or brain)
**Treatment for Renal Cell Carcinoma - What to Expect**

Your urologist will work with you to develop a personalized treatment plan that will provide the optimal treatment to ensure the best possible outcome. Chesapeake Urology physicians have extensive experience in some of the most advanced treatments for kidney cancer including minimally invasive surgery, which provides you with a quicker recovery, less pain and fewer surgical complications.

**Treatments for kidney cancer include:**

- **Surgery** – The standard treatment for renal cell carcinoma is surgery, which is performed in the hospital. The following procedures can be performed through various approaches but are sometimes performed laparoscopically or robotically, where several small incisions replace one larger one to permit less pain and faster recovery:
  - **Nephrectomy** – Removal of the whole kidney
  - **Partial nephrectomy** – Removal of only the cancerous part of the kidney. Studies have shown that this approach can be just as effective as a radical nephrectomy for many patients with early stage disease.

Alternatives to surgery for localized disease include the following:

- **Active Surveillance** – Deferring treatment and actively monitoring the tumor to assess its growth pattern
- **Cryosurgery** – Freezing the cancer cells to destroy them, using a needle either inserted through the skin or at the time of laparoscopy
- **Radiofrequency ablation** – Using a type of heat energy to destroy the cancer cells

In more advanced cases of cancer or in patients with metastases, we utilize targeted therapy which is a milder form of chemotherapy used to slow the growth of the tumor.

Every cancer is unique, just as you are, and your urologist will discuss which treatment is right for you. Your treatment will depend on a number of factors, including your age and overall health, the size and location of the tumor, and the extent to which the cancer has spread. Always feel free to ask your doctor questions about your treatment plan to ensure your comfort.

*The American Cancer Society’s most recent estimates for kidney cancer in the United States are in 2014: About 63,920 new cases of kidney cancer (39,140 in men and 24,780 in women) will occur.*
Because kidney cancer such as renal cell carcinoma may recur, your urologist will recommend follow-up care. Regular exams and follow-up care is very important for preventing and/or identifying recurrence of your cancer.

**Preventing Kidney Cancer**

Many types of cancers can be prevented to some extent by taking precautions and living a healthy lifestyle. Taking these steps can help lower your risk of developing kidney cancer or having a recurrence:

- **Quit smoking** – This is the number one thing you can do to help prevent kidney cancer. Chemicals in tobacco smoke are absorbed into the blood and pass through the kidneys. These chemicals can damage the kidney and increase your chances of getting kidney cancer or having your cancer come back after treatment.

- **Avoid exposure to dangerous chemicals and irritants.** Take proper safety precautions if you work in an environment with dangerous chemicals, which can be absorbed into the bloodstream and passed through your kidneys.

- ** Maintain a healthy weight** – Work to maintain a healthy weight by eating a well-balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Increase your exercise to help keep you in shape.

- **Get regular check-ups** – Stay on top of your health and keep chronic health conditions, such as high blood pressure, under control through the help of your doctor.

*For kidney and renal pelvis cancer, 63.4% are diagnosed at the local stage. The 5-year survival for localized kidney and renal pelvis cancer is 91.7%.*
Frequently Asked Questions About Kidney Cancer

Q: Why should I choose Chesapeake Urology for the diagnosis and treatment of kidney cancer?

A: When you choose Chesapeake Urology for the diagnosis and treatment of kidney cancer, you’re receiving the highest level of care by some of the region’s most experienced urologists. At Chesapeake Urology, our physicians are on the leading edge of the most sophisticated technology, advanced therapies and clinical trials for renal cell carcinoma. Our team of professionals and cancer specialists not only deliver the most advanced medical, surgical and oncologic care, but do so in the most compassionate way.

Q: What are the symptoms of renal cell carcinoma?

A: Kidney cancer, such as renal cell carcinoma (RCC), often has no symptoms in its early stages, which is why it’s so important to have annual physical exams and to stay on top of your own health. RCC can often be found on medical tests such as CT scans, ultrasounds or MRI scans where kidney cancers are found incidentally. For RCC that is more advanced, the most common symptom is hematuria, which is blood in the urine. Your doctor can detect hematuria through a urinalysis. If you experience any unusual symptoms, it’s always important to bring them to the attention of your physician.

Q: What are some of the risk factors associated with renal cell carcinoma?

A: Smoking is one of the top risk factors for the development of kidney cancer. Being over the age of 60, African American and male can also increase your risk of developing this disease, as can obesity and a family history of kidney cancer. Talk with your doctor about your risks and what you can do to help prevent kidney cancer.

Q: I’ve been diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma. What are my treatment options?

A: Chesapeake Urology offers patients a full arsenal of treatment options for kidney cancer. Surgery is the standard treatment for renal cell carcinoma, whether it’s a nephrectomy (complete removal of the kidney) or a partial nephrectomy (removal of the tumor and cancerous tissue in the kidney). Our urologists are specially trained in minimally invasive surgery, such as laparoscopic and robotic surgical techniques, to provide patients with the best outcomes possible.
Q: Can kidney cancer be prevented?

A: There are a number of lifestyle changes you can make to help prevent kidney cancer or the recurrence of the disease including:

- Quit smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Keep blood pressure under control
- Avoid exposure to dangerous chemicals and environmental toxins
- Exercise and eat fruits and vegetable
- Have regular physical exams

Q: Where can I find information about support groups for kidney cancer patients?

A: The Kidney Cancer Association sponsors support groups across the country. For information visit https://secure.kidneycancer.org/np/clients/kca/eventList.jspeventList.jsp

Q: What organization has a good support program for people who would like to stop smoking?

A: Quitting smoking is the single most important step a smoker can take to improve the length and quality of his or her life. Ask your physician about smoking cessation and aids available to help you to stop smoking. In addition, the American Lung Association has many options to help smokers quit permanently. For full details about these programs, visit the American Lung Association’s website at: www.lung.org/stop-smoking/how-to-quit/