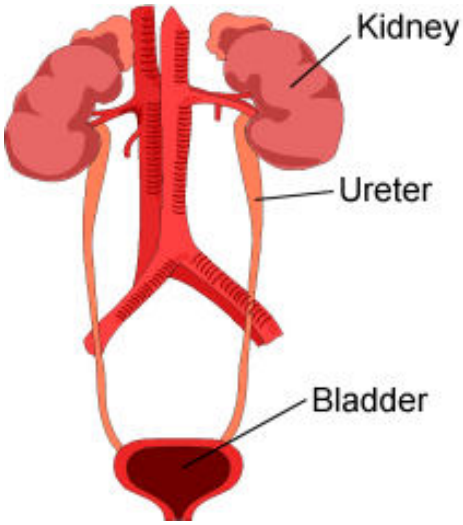
Kidney Biopsy

A biopsy is a test that involves collecting small pieces of tissue, usually through a needle. The tissue is then examined under a microscope. A kidney biopsy can help find a diagnosis and determine the best course of treatment. Your caregiver may recommend a kidney biopsy if you have any of the following conditions:

- **Hematuria**. This is blood in your urine.
- **Proteinuria**. This is when there is excessive protein in your urine.
- **Impaired kidney function** that causes excessive waste products in your blood.



A specialist will look at the kidney tissue samples to check for unusual deposits, scarring, or infecting organisms that would explain your condition. Your caregiver may discover that you have a condition that can be treated and cured. If you have progressive kidney failure, the biopsy may show how quickly the disease is advancing. A biopsy can also help explain why a transplanted kidney is not working properly. Talk with your caregiver about what information might be learned from the biopsy and the risks involved. This can help you make a decision about whether a biopsy is worthwhile in your case.

BEFORE THE TEST

- Make sure you understand the need for a biopsy.
- Tell your caregiver about any allergies you have and medicines you take.
- Avoid food and fluid for 8 hours before the test.

PREPARATION

- You will have to sign a consent form indicating that you understand the risks involved in this procedure. They are very rare. Discuss these risks thoroughly with your caregiver before you sign the form.
- Make sure your caregiver is aware of all the medicines you take and any drug allergies you might have. Shortly before the biopsy, you will give blood and urine samples. This is to make sure you do not have a condition that would suggest not doing a biopsy.

TEST PROCEDURES

- Kidney biopsies are usually done in a hospital. You may be fully awake with light sedation or you may be asleep under general anesthesia. If you are awake, you will be given a local anesthetic before the needle is inserted.
- You will lie on your stomach to position the kidneys near the surface of your back. If you have a transplanted kidney, you will lie on your back. The doctor will inject a local painkiller. For a *percutaneous* (through the skin) biopsy, the doctor will use a locating needle and x-ray or ultrasound equipment to find the right spot and then a collecting needle to gather the tissue. You will be asked to hold your breath as the doctor inserts the biopsy needle and collects the tissue. This is usually for about 30 seconds or a little longer for each insertion. Do not exhale until you are told.
- The entire procedure usually takes an hour. This includes time to locate the kidney, clean the biopsy site, inject the local painkiller, and obtain the tissue samples.
- Some patients should not have a percutaneous biopsy if they are prone to bleeding problems. These patients may still undergo a kidney biopsy through an open operation. This is when the surgeon makes an incision and can see the kidney to obtain a biopsy.

AFTER THE TEST

- You will lie on your back for 12 to 24 hours. During this time, your back will probably feel sore. If you have a transplanted kidney, you will lie on your stomach. You may stay in the hospital overnight after the

procedure so that staff can check your condition. You may notice some blood in your urine for 24 hours after the test. To detect any problems, your team will monitor your blood pressure and pulse, take blood samples to measure the amount of red cells, and examine the urine that you pass. On rare occasions when bleeding does not stop on its own, it may be necessary to replace lost blood with a transfusion.

- A rare complication is infection from the biopsy procedure.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF YOU HAVE:

- Bloody urine more than 24 hours after the test
- Fever
- Faintness or dizziness
- Inability to urinate
- Worsening pain in the biopsy site

GETTING THE RESULTS

After the biopsy, the doctor will inspect the tissue samples in the laboratory. It usually takes a few days to get the complete biopsy results. If your case is urgent, you may have an early report within a few hours. It is your responsibility to get the results of your test(s). Ask for the phone number that you should call for your results.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

American Kidney Fund
6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 1010
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: 1-800-638-8299 or 301-881-3052
Email: helpline@akfinc.org
Internet: www.akfinc.org

National Kidney Foundation
30 East 33rd Street
New York, NY 10016
Phone: 1-800-622-9010 or 212-889-2210
Email: info@kidney.org
Internet: www.kidney.org

National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse
3 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3580
Email: nkudic@info.niddk.nih.gov
The National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Document Released: 10/28/2005 Document Re-Released: 06/15/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.