

Kidney biopsy: What to expect



A kidney biopsy is a procedure to test small pieces of kidney tissue to help doctors learn what is causing damage to your kidneys. Many kidney diseases have similar symptoms, so a kidney biopsy can help make and confirm a diagnosis to get clear answers. It can also show signs of scarring, inflammation and how much damage has already been caused.

Your doctor may use a kidney biopsy if they suspect you have a rare disease, like focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), to help confirm your diagnosis and guide treatment.

They may also recommend a biopsy if your tests show:

- Blood in your urine (hematuria)
- Protein in your urine (proteinuria)
- Waste products in your blood that shows your kidneys are not working as well as they should

WHAT TO EXPECT



Before

- Your doctor and care team may ask you not to take certain medicines leading up to the procedure.
- You may need to stop eating or drinking before the procedure.
- It is important to arrange a ride home and plan time to rest after the biopsy.



During

- A kidney biopsy is usually done in a hospital or outpatient setting.
- You will lie on your side (or face down on your abdomen) and imaging will be used to guide a thin needle to collect a few small samples of kidney tissue.
- Medicine will be given to numb the area so you should not feel any pain.
- The whole procedure usually takes less than an hour.



After

- You will be monitored by the care team for a few hours to make sure there are no problems.
- You may feel tired, sore or have mild discomfort in the affected area.
- You may need to avoid physical activity or heavy lifting for a short time.
- Be sure to stay on top of any follow-up tests and appointments.
- Your doctor and care team will tell you when you can restart any medicines you had to stop taking before the biopsy procedure.

Call your doctor right away if you notice heavy bleeding in urine, dizziness, fever, increasing pain, redness or swelling at the biopsy site.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

Kidney biopsy results may take several days to a few weeks to come back. Ask your doctor for a full copy of your biopsy report and to explain your results in a way you can understand. Understanding your biopsy results can help you feel more confident about your next steps and care plan.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CARE

You have the right to understand your diagnosis, biopsy results and care plan. If the biopsy results are not clear, or you still have questions, you have the right to ask for a second opinion from another pathologist (doctor who studies samples of tissues to diagnose the cause of kidney problems). This can be particularly helpful for rare kidney diseases.

You can ask your doctor:

- *“How do my biopsy results affect my treatment plan?”*
- *“What are the goals of treatment based on my results?”*
- *“How will we know if treatment is working?”*
- *“How often will I need labs or follow-up visits?”*
- *“Are there any lifestyle or medicine changes I should make?”*

Bringing a caregiver, friend or family member to appointments can help you feel supported and help you take notes and ask questions. **Remember, you are a key part of your care team.** Speaking up and asking questions can help you feel more in control of your care.



To learn more about kidney biopsy visit:
kidneyfund.org/kidneybiopsy

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