

Understanding focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS)



Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) is a kidney disease in which there is scarring in the kidney's tiny filters. Over time, this scarring can make it harder for your kidneys to do their job of filtering waste and water, leading to kidney failure.

The only way to confirm that you have FSGS is by a kidney biopsy. A kidney biopsy can also identify the FSGS type, show how much scarring has occurred and help guide treatment.

FSGS can affect people of any age, but it is most often diagnosed in adults. It is slightly more common in men and occurs more often in people who are Black or African American. Symptoms can appear mild at first, but many people don't notice any symptoms until later stages.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF FSGS INCLUDE:

- Swelling in your legs, ankles, feet or around your eyes
- Weight gain
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Foamy or bubbly urine (pee)

OTHER SIGNS OF FSGS THAT YOUR DOCTOR MAY FIND:

- High levels of protein in your urine
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Low levels of protein in your blood

If you notice worsening swelling, very foamy urine, or sudden weight gain, call your doctor right away.

TYPES OF FSGS

Damage to the kidneys' filtering units occurs in all forms of FSGS. Doctors group FSGS types by the cause of disease:



Primary FSGS

Often for unknown reasons and thought to be related to immune system.



Genetic FSGS

Is caused by mutations (changes) in certain genes and may run in families or can be a random mutation.

If someone in your family has FSGS or kidney disease, your doctor may recommend genetic testing.



Secondary FSGS

Occurs because of another existing condition or cause, such as having high blood pressure, viral infections, obesity or taking certain types of medicines.



Unknown FSGS

There are no genetic or secondary causes identified and the criteria for primary FSGS are not met.

In some people who receive a kidney transplant, FSGS can come back. This is called **recurrent FSGS**. If you've had a transplant, your care team will closely monitor you for any signs of recurrence, such as protein in the urine.



TREATMENT

Your care team will help create a treatment plan that depends on the type and severity of FSGS and any underlying causes or conditions. Your doctor may prescribe immunosuppressants, which are medicines that help control the immune system.

They may also prescribe you medicines to lower protein in urine, control blood pressure, and reduce swelling.

Early detection and treatment may help protect your kidneys from further damage, so it's important to talk to your doctor about FSGS and treatment options.



To learn more about FSGS visit:
kidneyfund.org/FSGS

Support for this educational content is provided by:

