



THE KIDNEYS GLOSSARY

A Complete A-to-Z Guide to Kidney Terms

Anatomy, diseases, tests, dialysis, and transplant in plain language

Inside this guide

- More than 430 kidney terms explained simply
- Anatomy, function, diseases, symptoms, and tests
- Dialysis, procedures, medicines, nutrition, and transplant
- Abbreviations, word parts, CKD stages, and a kidney tests quick guide
 - Terms by category and resources

For patients, families, students, and community members

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How to use this glossary

This glossary explains **439 kidney-related terms** in plain language: anatomy, how the kidneys work, diseases, symptoms, tests, imaging, dialysis, procedures, medicines, nutrition, genetics, and transplant. Terms are listed **alphabetically**, and each has a colored **category tag**. Where a term has another name or a related entry, the definition says See followed by that term. Reference sections at the back list common **abbreviations**, **word parts**, **CKD stages**, a **quick guide to kidney tests**, and **terms by category**.

Tag	Meaning	Tag	Meaning
ANATOMY	Parts of the kidney and urinary tract	MEDICINE	Medicines
FUNCTION	How the kidneys work	NUTRITION	Food, drink, and lifestyle
DISEASE	Diseases and conditions	TRANSPLANT	Transplant and donation
SYMPTOM	Symptoms and physical signs	DIALYSIS	Dialysis and access
TEST	Laboratory and other tests	GENETIC	Inherited conditions
IMAGING	Imaging tests	PATHOLOGY	What tissue shows under the microscope
PROCEDURE	Procedures and treatments	PEOPLE	Care team and support

Important

This glossary is for education and is **not medical advice**. Definitions are simplified, and normal values and treatments vary by person and laboratory. Always ask your own kidney doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about your situation.

Where to begin

New to kidney terms? Start with: **kidney, nephron, GFR, creatinine, albuminuria, chronic kidney disease, dialysis, fistula, and transplant waiting list**. Then look up anything you hear at appointments.

PART 1

A to Z Glossary

A

Access, vascular	The connection that lets blood be taken from and returned to the body for hemodialysis: a fistula, a graft, or a catheter.	DIALYSIS
ACE inhibitor	A blood pressure medicine (such as lisinopril or enalapril) that also lowers protein leak and slows many kidney diseases. It can raise potassium and needs blood test monitoring.	MEDICINE
Acid-base balance	The body's control of acidity (pH). The kidneys remove acid in urine and recover bicarbonate, working with the lungs to keep blood pH in a narrow range.	FUNCTION
Acute interstitial nephritis (AIN)	Sudden swelling of the tissue between the kidney tubules, most often caused by a medicine or an infection. It can often be reversed if the cause is stopped.	DISEASE
Acute kidney injury (AKI)	A sudden drop in kidney function over hours to days, often from low blood flow, infection, medicines, or a blockage. It may	DISEASE

	recover, or lead to chronic kidney disease.	
Acute rejection	An episode in which the immune system attacks a transplanted kidney, often within the first months. It is often treatable if caught early.	TRANSPLANT
Acute tubular necrosis (ATN)	Damage to the kidney tubule cells from low blood flow or toxins. It is the most common cause of AKI in hospital and often recovers over weeks.	DISEASE
Advance directive	A legal document stating your wishes for medical care and naming someone to decide for you if you cannot. It is important for everyone with serious illness.	PEOPLE
Afferent arteriole	The tiny artery that brings blood into the glomerulus. Its width helps control filtration.	ANATOMY
Albumin	A blood protein. Albumin in the urine (albuminuria) is an early sign of kidney damage, while low albumin in blood can come from kidney protein loss or poor nutrition.	TEST
Albuminuria	Albumin in the urine. It is the most important early sign of kidney damage, especially in diabetes and high blood pressure. See UACR.	SYMPTOM
Aldosterone	A hormone from the adrenal glands that tells the kidneys to keep sodium and remove potassium. It raises blood pressure.	FUNCTION
Alport syndrome	An inherited condition affecting the kidney filter, hearing, and eyes. It causes blood in the urine and kidney failure that often begins in young adulthood.	GENETIC
Amyloidosis	A group of diseases in which abnormal protein (amyloid) builds up in organs, including the kidneys, causing protein loss and kidney failure.	DISEASE
Analgesic nephropathy	Kidney damage from years of heavy use of pain relievers, especially combination products and NSAIDs.	DISEASE
ANCA vasculitis	An autoimmune disease with inflammation of small blood vessels, often harming the kidney filters. It can cause rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis.	DISEASE
Anemia of CKD	Low red blood cells in kidney disease because the kidneys make less erythropoietin. It causes tiredness and is treated with iron and ESAs.	DISEASE
Angiotensin	A hormone that narrows blood vessels and makes the body hold salt and water, raising blood pressure. Part of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system.	FUNCTION
Anion gap	A calculation from blood electrolytes that helps find the cause of metabolic acidosis.	TEST
Antibody-mediated rejection	A form of transplant rejection caused by antibodies, often against donor HLA, that injure the graft's small vessels.	TRANSPLANT
Anti-GBM disease	A rare autoimmune disease in which antibodies attack the glomerular basement membrane, causing fast kidney failure and sometimes lung bleeding (Goodpasture syndrome).	DISEASE
Anuria	Almost no urine, less than about 100 mL a day. It signals severe kidney failure or a complete blockage and needs urgent care.	SYMPTOM
APOL1 gene variants	Gene variants, mainly in people with recent African ancestry, that raise the risk of certain kidney diseases such as FSGS and	GENETIC

	hypertension-related kidney disease.	
ARB (angiotensin II receptor blocker)	A blood pressure medicine (such as losartan or valsartan) that lowers protein leak and slows many kidney diseases. It can raise potassium.	MEDICINE
Arcuate arteries	Arteries that arch over the base of each renal pyramid, between the medulla and cortex, and feed the kidney's smaller vessels.	ANATOMY
Arteriovenous fistula (AVF)	A surgical joining of an artery to a vein, usually in the arm, which makes the vein larger and stronger for repeated needle use in hemodialysis. It is the preferred access.	DIALYSIS
Arteriovenous graft (AVG)	A soft synthetic tube that links an artery to a vein under the skin, used for hemodialysis when veins are too small for a fistula.	DIALYSIS
Asymptomatic bacteriuria	Bacteria in the urine without symptoms. It usually does not need antibiotics, except in pregnancy and before some urinary procedures.	DISEASE
Atheroembolic renal disease	Kidney injury from cholesterol crystals that break off plaques and lodge in small kidney arteries, often after a vascular procedure.	DISEASE
Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD)	The most common inherited kidney disease. Many fluid-filled cysts grow in both kidneys, enlarging them and often leading to kidney failure in adulthood.	GENETIC
Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease (ARPKD)	A rare inherited kidney and liver disease that begins in infancy or early childhood, with cysts and enlarged kidneys.	GENETIC
Azathioprine	An immune-suppressing medicine used after transplant and in some autoimmune kidney diseases.	MEDICINE
Azotemia	A high level of nitrogen waste products, such as urea and creatinine, in the blood from reduced kidney function.	SYMPTOM

B

Bacteriuria	Bacteria in the urine. See Urinary tract infection.	DISEASE
Bartter and Gitelman syndromes	Rare inherited tubule conditions that cause salt and potassium loss.	GENETIC
Basement membrane (glomerular)	The thin filtering layer of the glomerulus between capillary cells and podocytes. It lets water and small molecules through but holds back proteins.	ANATOMY
Belatacept	An intravenous anti-rejection medicine that blocks immune cell activation, used as an alternative to calcineurin inhibitors after kidney transplant.	MEDICINE
Bicarbonate	A blood base that neutralizes acid. A low level (metabolic acidosis) is common in CKD and is tested as CO2 or bicarbonate.	TEST
Bioimpedance	A painless test that uses a weak electric current to estimate body fluid and fat, used to help set a dialysis target weight.	DIALYSIS
Biopsy, kidney	Taking a tiny sample of kidney tissue with a needle, usually under ultrasound, to look at under a microscope. It shows the cause and extent of kidney damage.	PROCEDURE

BK virus	A common virus that can injure a transplanted kidney when immune suppression is strong. Treated mainly by lowering anti-rejection medicines.	TRANSPLANT
Bladder	The muscular sac that stores urine until it is passed. Normal capacity is about 400 to 500 mL.	ANATOMY
Bladder outlet obstruction	A blockage at the bladder exit, most often from an enlarged prostate or a urethral stricture, that can back up urine and damage the kidneys.	DISEASE
Blood pressure	The force of blood in the arteries. High blood pressure damages kidney vessels, and kidney disease raises blood pressure.	TEST
Blood urea nitrogen (BUN)	A blood test of urea, a waste product of protein. It rises with kidney failure, but also with dehydration, bleeding in the gut, and high protein intake.	TEST
Bowman capsule	The cup-shaped covering around the glomerulus that collects the filtered fluid and passes it to the tubule.	ANATOMY
Buttonhole cannulation	A needle method that uses the same two spots, at the same angle, for each dialysis. It can be less painful but carries a higher infection risk, so strict cleaning is needed.	DIALYSIS

C

Calcimimetic	A medicine (cinacalcet, etelcalcetide) that makes the parathyroid glands act as if calcium is higher, lowering PTH in secondary hyperparathyroidism.	MEDICINE
Calcineurin inhibitor	A class of anti-rejection medicines, tacrolimus and cyclosporine, that block immune T cells. They can harm the kidney and raise blood pressure.	MEDICINE
Calciophylaxis	A rare, painful and serious condition in which calcium blocks small blood vessels in the skin and fat, causing skin sores. It is seen mostly in people with kidney failure.	DISEASE
Calcitriol	The active form of vitamin D, made in the kidneys. It is given as a medicine when kidneys can no longer make enough.	MEDICINE
Calcium	A mineral needed for bones, nerves, and muscles. Kidney disease disturbs calcium, phosphorus, and PTH balance.	TEST
Calcium oxalate stone	The most common kidney stone type, formed from calcium and oxalate in concentrated urine. See Kidney stones.	DISEASE
Calyx (calyces)	A cup-shaped space in the kidney that collects urine from a papilla and sends it to the renal pelvis.	ANATOMY
Cardiorenal syndrome	Heart and kidney problems that worsen each other: heart failure reduces kidney blood flow, and kidney disease strains the heart.	DISEASE
Cast (urine)	A tiny cylinder of protein or cells formed in the tubules and seen in urine under a microscope. Different casts point to different kidney conditions.	TEST
Catheter, dialysis (tunneled)	A soft tube placed in a large neck or chest vein, tunneled under the skin, used for hemodialysis when no fistula or graft is ready. Infection is the main risk.	DIALYSIS
Catheter, peritoneal dialysis	A soft tube placed through the belly wall into the peritoneal cavity to carry dialysis fluid in and out.	DIALYSIS

Catheter, urinary	A tube passed through the urethra into the bladder to drain urine, either briefly or left in place.	PROCEDURE
Chronic allograft nephropathy	An older term for slowly worsening function of a transplanted kidney with scarring. Now described as interstitial fibrosis and tubular atrophy (IFTA).	TRANSPLANT
Chronic kidney disease (CKD)	Kidney damage or reduced function lasting 3 months or more. It is staged by eGFR (G1 to G5) and albuminuria (A1 to A3).	DISEASE
Chronic rejection	Slow, long-term immune injury to a transplanted kidney that gradually reduces function.	TRANSPLANT
CKD stages	Five levels of eGFR: G1 at least 90, G2 60 to 89, G3a 45 to 59, G3b 30 to 44, G4 15 to 29, G5 under 15. Albuminuria categories A1 to A3 are added to show risk.	DISEASE
CKD-EPI equation	The formula used to estimate GFR from creatinine (and sometimes cystatin C), age, and sex. The current version does not use race.	TEST
CKD-MBD (mineral and bone disorder)	Abnormal calcium, phosphorus, PTH, and vitamin D balance in kidney disease, causing weak bones and calcium deposits in blood vessels.	DISEASE
Clearance	The volume of blood cleared of a substance by the kidneys per minute. GFR is the clearance of a filtered marker.	FUNCTION
Cold ischemia time	The time a donor kidney is kept cold and without blood flow between removal and transplant. Shorter is better.	TRANSPLANT
Collecting duct	The tube at the end of a nephron that gathers urine, and under the control of ADH adjusts how concentrated it becomes.	ANATOMY
Complement	A group of immune proteins. Overactivity of complement underlies some kidney diseases, such as C3 glomerulopathy and atypical HUS.	FUNCTION
Computed tomography (CT)	An X-ray test making cross-section pictures of the kidneys, stones, tumors, and blood vessels, sometimes with contrast dye.	IMAGING
Congenital anomalies of the kidney and urinary tract (CAKUT)	Birth differences in the kidneys and urinary tract, the most common cause of kidney failure in children.	GENETIC
Conservative kidney management	A planned approach for kidney failure that focuses on symptoms, comfort, and quality of life without dialysis or transplant. Also called supportive or comprehensive conservative care.	DIALYSIS
Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD)	Peritoneal dialysis done by hand, usually three to five exchanges a day, without a machine.	DIALYSIS
Continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD)	Automated peritoneal dialysis using a machine (cycler) overnight while you sleep. Also called APD.	DIALYSIS
Continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT)	Slow, round-the-clock dialysis used in intensive care for very ill people with AKI.	DIALYSIS
Contrast dye	A substance injected to make vessels and organs show up on CT or X-ray. It can injure kidneys in some people, so hydration and dose matter.	IMAGING

Contrast-associated AKI	A drop in kidney function within days after iodinated contrast dye, most often in people with existing CKD, diabetes, or dehydration.	DISEASE
Convection	The movement of water and dissolved wastes across a dialysis membrane driven by pressure, used in hemodiafiltration.	DIALYSIS
Cortex, renal	The outer layer of the kidney that contains the glomeruli and much of the tubules.	ANATOMY
Corticosteroids	Anti-inflammatory hormone medicines such as prednisone, used for many immune-related kidney diseases and in transplant.	MEDICINE
Cramps, muscle	Painful muscle tightening, common during or after dialysis when fluid is removed quickly.	SYMPTOM
Creatinine	A waste product from muscle, filtered by the kidneys. A high blood level means reduced kidney function, but muscle mass and diet also affect it.	TEST
Creatinine clearance	An estimate of kidney filtering from blood creatinine and a timed urine collection, used when an eGFR may be unreliable.	TEST
Crescentic glomerulonephritis	Severe glomerular inflammation with crescent-shaped scars in Bowman space that can cause rapid kidney failure.	DISEASE
Crossmatch	A blood test mixing donor cells and recipient serum to see if the recipient has antibodies against the donor. A positive crossmatch usually means the kidney should not be transplanted.	TRANSPLANT
Cuff (catheter)	A small fabric ring on a tunneled catheter that tissue grows into, anchoring it and blocking germs.	DIALYSIS
Cyclosporine	A calcineurin inhibitor anti-rejection medicine. It can raise blood pressure and affect kidney function, and many drugs interact with it.	MEDICINE
Cyst, kidney	A fluid-filled sac in the kidney. Simple cysts are common with age and usually harmless, unlike the many cysts in polycystic kidney disease.	DISEASE
Cystatin C	A blood protein used with or instead of creatinine to estimate GFR. It is less affected by muscle mass.	TEST
Cystinosis	A rare inherited disease in which cystine builds up in cells, damaging the kidneys (Fanconi syndrome) and other organs.	GENETIC
Cystinuria	An inherited condition that causes cystine kidney stones.	GENETIC
Cystitis	Inflammation or infection of the bladder, usually causing burning, frequency, and urgency.	DISEASE
Cystoscopy	A test using a thin camera passed through the urethra to look inside the bladder.	PROCEDURE
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)	A common virus that can cause serious illness in transplant recipients. Prevented with antiviral medicines and monitored by blood tests.	TRANSPLANT

My notes

D		
Dapagliflozin	An SGLT2 inhibitor that protects the kidneys and heart in CKD, with or without diabetes, and lowers the risk of kidney failure.	MEDICINE
DASH diet	An eating pattern rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy that lowers blood pressure. In advanced CKD, potassium and phosphorus limits may need adjusting.	NUTRITION
Deceased donor	A person who has died and whose organs are donated for transplant, after brain death or circulatory death.	TRANSPLANT
Dehydration	Too little body water. It is a common cause of reversible AKI, especially with vomiting, diarrhea, or heat.	DISEASE
Delayed graft function	When a new kidney does not work right away and the recipient needs dialysis in the first week. It often improves with time.	TRANSPLANT
Desensitization	Treatment to lower harmful antibodies in a highly sensitized patient so a transplant is possible.	TRANSPLANT
Diabetes insipidus	A condition in which the kidneys cannot concentrate urine, causing very large amounts of dilute urine and intense thirst. It is not related to diabetes mellitus.	DISEASE
Diabetic kidney disease (DKD)	Kidney damage caused by diabetes, and the leading cause of kidney failure in the United States. It often starts with albuminuria.	DISEASE
Dialysate	The cleaning fluid in dialysis. It contains a balanced mix of electrolytes, and wastes and extra fluid move into it from the blood.	DIALYSIS
Dialysis	A treatment that does part of the kidneys' job by cleaning the blood and removing extra fluid, using a machine (hemodialysis) or the lining of the belly (peritoneal dialysis).	DIALYSIS
Dialysis access	See Access, vascular.	DIALYSIS
Dialysis adequacy	A measure of whether dialysis removes enough waste, often Kt/V or URR, along with how you feel and your lab results.	DIALYSIS
Dialysis disequilibrium syndrome	A rare problem in the first treatments caused by fast removal of waste, leading to headache, nausea, confusion, or seizures. Shorter, gentler first sessions lower the risk.	DISEASE
Dialysis unit (center)	A facility where people receive in-center hemodialysis, supervised by nurses and technicians.	DIALYSIS
Dialyzer	The filter of the dialysis machine, often called the artificial kidney, where blood and dialysate are separated by a thin membrane.	DIALYSIS
Dietitian, renal	A registered dietitian who specializes in diet for kidney disease, dialysis, and transplant.	PEOPLE
Diffusion	The movement of wastes from the blood, where they are concentrated, into the dialysate, where they are less concentrated, across the membrane.	DIALYSIS
Dipstick (urine)	A strip dipped in urine that changes color to show protein, blood, glucose, and other substances. A quick screening test.	TEST
Distal convoluted tubule	The tubule segment after the loop of Henle where sodium, calcium, and potassium are fine-tuned under hormone control.	ANATOMY

Diuresis	Increased urine production.	FUNCTION
Diuretic	A “water pill” that makes the kidneys remove more salt and water. Used for swelling and high blood pressure.	MEDICINE
Donation after circulatory death (DCD)	Organ donation after the heart has stopped, rather than after brain death. DCD kidneys have a higher chance of delayed function but good long-term results.	TRANSPLANT
Donor, living	A healthy person who donates a kidney to another person. A person can live a healthy life with one kidney.	TRANSPLANT
Donor-specific antibody (DSA)	An antibody in the recipient that targets the donor’s HLA. It can cause antibody-mediated rejection.	TRANSPLANT
Dry weight	Your target weight after dialysis, when extra fluid has been removed and you have no swelling or low blood pressure. Also called target or estimated dry weight.	DIALYSIS
Dwell time	The time peritoneal dialysis fluid stays in the belly before it is drained.	DIALYSIS
Dysuria	Pain or burning when passing urine, often from a urinary tract infection.	SYMPTOM

E

Edema	Swelling from extra fluid in the tissues, often in the feet, ankles, legs, hands, or around the eyes in kidney disease.	SYMPTOM
Efferent arteriole	The tiny artery that carries blood out of the glomerulus. Its tone helps hold up filtration pressure.	ANATOMY
eGFR (estimated glomerular filtration rate)	A calculated estimate of how well the kidneys filter, from blood creatinine, age, and sex. It is the main number used to stage CKD.	TEST
Electrolyte imbalance	Levels of sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, or bicarbonate that are too high or too low.	DISEASE
Electrolytes	Minerals in blood and body fluids, such as sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, and bicarbonate, that the kidneys keep in balance.	FUNCTION
Empagliflozin	An SGLT2 inhibitor that protects the kidneys and heart in people with CKD, diabetes, or heart failure.	MEDICINE
End-stage kidney disease (ESKD)	Kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant to live. Also called end-stage renal disease (ESRD).	DISEASE
Erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA)	A medicine, such as epoetin or darbepoetin, that replaces EPO to raise red blood cells in CKD anemia.	MEDICINE
Erythropoietin (EPO)	A hormone made by the kidneys that tells bone marrow to make red blood cells. Low EPO causes anemia of CKD.	FUNCTION
ESRD Network	One of 18 regional organizations that oversee dialysis quality, help patients with concerns, and support patient safety and education.	PEOPLE
Excretion	Removal of waste products from the body, mainly in urine by the kidneys.	FUNCTION
Exercise	Regular physical activity that helps blood pressure, blood sugar, mood, and strength in CKD and dialysis, with your care team’s	NUTRITION

	guidance.	
Exit site	The place where a dialysis catheter leaves the skin. It is kept clean and covered to prevent infection.	DIALYSIS
Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL)	A treatment that breaks kidney stones into small pieces with shock waves from outside the body so they can pass.	PROCEDURE

F

Fabry disease	An inherited enzyme deficiency that causes pain, skin spots, and progressive kidney, heart, and nerve disease. Treatable with enzyme therapy.	GENETIC
Fanconi syndrome	A problem of the proximal tubule in which glucose, amino acids, phosphate, and bicarbonate are lost in the urine. It can be inherited or caused by drugs.	DISEASE
Fatigue	Persistent tiredness, very common in CKD and dialysis because of anemia, toxins, poor sleep, and low mood.	SYMPTOM
Ferritin	A blood protein that stores iron. It is used with TSAT to judge iron stores in CKD.	TEST
FGF23	A hormone from bone that lowers phosphate and active vitamin D. Levels rise early in CKD and are linked to heart risk.	FUNCTION
Filtration	The first step of making urine: water and small molecules are squeezed out of blood in the glomerulus.	FUNCTION
Finerenone	A nonsteroidal mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist that slows kidney disease progression and lowers heart risk in people with diabetic kidney disease. It can raise potassium.	MEDICINE
Fistula	See Arteriovenous fistula.	DIALYSIS
Flank pain	Pain in the side of the back below the ribs, which can come from a kidney stone, infection, or blockage.	SYMPTOM
Fluid overload	Too much fluid in the body, causing swelling, weight gain, high blood pressure, and shortness of breath. See Volume overload.	DISEASE
Fluid restriction	A daily limit on all liquids, often about 1 liter for people on dialysis with little urine. Set by your care team.	NUTRITION
Foamy urine	Urine with persistent foam that may mean protein is leaking from the kidneys.	SYMPTOM
Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS)	A scarring pattern in parts of some glomeruli that causes heavy protein loss and can lead to kidney failure. It may be primary, genetic, or caused by other conditions.	DISEASE
Frequency (urinary)	Needing to urinate more often than usual.	SYMPTOM
Furosemide	A strong loop diuretic (Lasix) used to treat swelling and fluid overload.	MEDICINE

My notes

G

Genetic testing	Testing DNA for inherited kidney conditions such as polycystic kidney disease and Alport syndrome.	TEST
Gerota fascia	The tough fibrous layer that surrounds the kidney, adrenal gland, and surrounding fat.	ANATOMY
Glomerular filtration rate (GFR)	How much blood the glomeruli filter per minute, normally about 90 to 120 mL/min in a healthy adult. It falls with kidney damage and age.	TEST
Glomerulonephritis	Inflammation of the glomeruli, causing blood and protein in the urine and sometimes falling kidney function. There are many types.	DISEASE
Glomerulosclerosis	Scarring of the glomeruli, seen on biopsy, that permanently reduces filtering.	PATHOLOGY
Glomerulus	A tuft of tiny capillaries in each nephron where blood is filtered. Each kidney has about a million.	ANATOMY
GLP-1 receptor agonist	A class of diabetes and weight-loss medicines (semaglutide, liraglutide, dulaglutide, tirzepatide acts on GIP too) with kidney and heart benefits in type 2 diabetes.	MEDICINE
Glucosuria	Sugar in the urine, seen with high blood sugar, SGLT2 inhibitors, and some kidney tubule conditions.	SYMPTOM
Gout	A painful joint condition caused by uric acid crystals. It is common in CKD and can contribute to kidney stones.	DISEASE
Graft	The transplanted organ. “Graft survival” is how long the transplanted kidney keeps working.	TRANSPLANT
Graft failure	Loss of function of a transplanted kidney, requiring a return to dialysis or a repeat transplant.	TRANSPLANT
Gross hematuria	Visible blood in the urine, turning it red, pink, or brown. It always needs evaluation.	SYMPTOM

H

24-hour urine collection	Collecting all urine over a full day to measure protein, creatinine, and minerals, used for stones and to estimate kidney function.	TEST
Hematuria	Blood in the urine, visible or only seen on testing. It can come from stones, infection, tumors, or glomerular disease.	SYMPTOM
Hemodiafiltration (HDF)	A type of dialysis that combines diffusion and convection to remove larger waste molecules.	DIALYSIS
Hemodialysis catheter	See Catheter, dialysis (tunneled).	DIALYSIS
Hemodialysis (HD)	A treatment that cleans blood outside the body using a dialysis machine and a filter, usually 3 times a week for 3 to 4 hours in a center, or at home.	DIALYSIS
Hemoglobin	The oxygen-carrying protein in red blood cells. Low levels (anemia) are common in CKD.	TEST
Hemoglobin A1c	A blood test showing average blood sugar over 2 to 3 months, used in diabetes care. It can be less accurate in advanced CKD and dialysis.	TEST

Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS)	A serious condition with destroyed red blood cells, low platelets, and kidney failure, often after certain E. coli infections in children.	DISEASE
Heparin	A blood thinner used in the dialysis circuit to keep blood from clotting in the lines and dialyzer.	MEDICINE
Hepatorenal syndrome	Kidney failure that develops in people with severe liver disease because of changes in blood flow to the kidneys.	DISEASE
Hilum, renal	The notch on the inner edge of each kidney where the renal artery and vein enter and the ureter leaves.	ANATOMY
HIV-associated nephropathy (HIVAN)	A form of kidney scarring caused by HIV infection, mainly in people with recent African ancestry.	DISEASE
HLA (human leukocyte antigen)	Proteins on cell surfaces that the immune system uses to tell self from non-self. Matching donor and recipient HLA lowers rejection risk.	TRANSPLANT
Home dialysis	Dialysis done at home, either peritoneal dialysis or home hemodialysis, after training. Often gives more schedule flexibility.	DIALYSIS
Home hemodialysis	Hemodialysis done at home with a partner or on a simple machine, often more often or overnight.	DIALYSIS
Horseshoe kidney	A common variation in which the two kidneys are joined at the bottom. It is usually harmless but raises the risk of stones and infection.	GENETIC
Hospice	Comfort-focused care for people in the last months of life, usually at home, with support for the family.	PEOPLE
Hydration	Having enough water in the body. People with advanced CKD on fluid limits should follow their team's targets.	NUTRITION
Hydronephrosis	Swelling of the kidney from urine that cannot drain, due to a stone, blockage, or reflux.	DISEASE
Hypercalcemia	A high blood calcium level that can harm the kidneys and cause stones.	DISEASE
Hyperfiltration	Increased filtering in remaining nephrons after kidney loss, or in early diabetes. Over time it damages the glomeruli.	FUNCTION
Hyperkalemia	A high blood potassium level. It can cause dangerous heart rhythm problems, often without warning symptoms. See Potassium.	DISEASE
Hyperparathyroidism, secondary	High PTH that develops in CKD in response to low calcium, high phosphorus, and low active vitamin D. It weakens bones.	DISEASE
Hyperphosphatemia	A high blood phosphorus level, common in advanced CKD. It is treated with diet changes and phosphate binders.	DISEASE
Hypertension	High blood pressure. It is both a cause and a consequence of kidney disease.	DISEASE
Hypertensive nephrosclerosis	Kidney scarring from years of uncontrolled high blood pressure, a leading cause of CKD.	DISEASE
Hyperuricemia	A high blood uric acid level, which can cause gout and kidney stones.	DISEASE
Hypocalcemia	A low blood calcium level, common in advanced CKD.	DISEASE

Hypokalemia	A low blood potassium level, from diuretics, vomiting, or diarrhea.	DISEASE
Hyponatremia	A low blood sodium level, often from too much water relative to sodium.	DISEASE
Hypotension, intradialytic	A drop in blood pressure during dialysis, causing dizziness, cramps, or nausea. Managing fluid gains and medicines helps.	DISEASE
I		
Icodextrin	A sugar-based peritoneal dialysis solution that draws fluid out over a long dwell, often used for the long overnight or daytime exchange.	DIALYSIS
IgA nephropathy	The most common glomerulonephritis in the world. IgA deposits in the glomeruli cause blood and protein in the urine and slow kidney damage in some people.	DISEASE
Immunosuppressants	Medicines that lower the immune system, used after transplant and in immune-related kidney diseases. Examples include tacrolimus, mycophenolate, and prednisone.	MEDICINE
Incontinence, urinary	Accidental loss of urine. It has many causes and is treatable.	SYMPTOM
Incremental dialysis	Starting dialysis less often than three times a week, or for shorter sessions, for people who still have good residual kidney function, then increasing as needed.	DIALYSIS
Induction therapy	Strong immune-suppressing medicines given around the time of transplant to lower the risk of early rejection.	TRANSPLANT
Indwelling catheter	A urinary catheter left in the bladder for days or longer, which raises the risk of infection.	PROCEDURE
Interdialytic weight gain (IDWG)	The weight gained between dialysis sessions, mostly fluid. Keeping it modest (about 4% of dry weight or less for many people) makes treatment easier.	DIALYSIS
Interlobar arteries	Arteries that run between the renal pyramids and branch from the segmental arteries.	ANATOMY
Interstitial cystitis	A chronic bladder pain condition with urgency and frequency, without infection.	DISEASE
Interstitial fibrosis and tubular atrophy (IFTA)	Scarring of the kidney tissue between tubules, with shrunk tubules. It is a common marker of chronic kidney injury and of long-term graft wear.	PATHOLOGY
Interstitium	The tissue between the kidney's tubules and blood vessels, which can become inflamed or scarred.	ANATOMY
Intravenous pyelogram (IVP)	An older X-ray test in which contrast dye is injected to outline the kidneys, ureters, and bladder. Largely replaced by CT urography.	IMAGING
Iron deficiency	Low iron stores, a common cause of anemia in CKD. It is treated with iron supplements or intravenous iron.	DISEASE
Iron therapy (IV iron)	Iron given by vein, often during dialysis, to treat iron deficiency when pills do not work well.	MEDICINE
Ischemic nephropathy	Kidney damage from narrowed renal arteries that reduce blood flow.	DISEASE

J

Jugular vein	A large neck vein commonly used for tunneled dialysis catheters.	DIALYSIS
Juxtaglomerular apparatus	A structure at the glomerulus where specialized cells release renin and sense blood flow and sodium to regulate blood pressure.	ANATOMY
Juxtamedullary nephron	A nephron with a long loop of Henle that dips deep into the medulla, important for concentrating urine.	ANATOMY

K

KDIGO	Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes, an international group that publishes guidelines for CKD, dialysis, and transplant care.	PEOPLE
Kidney	One of two bean-shaped organs, about 4 to 5 inches long, in the back of the upper abdomen. They filter blood, remove waste, balance fluid and minerals, and make hormones.	ANATOMY
Kidney allocation system (KAS)	The national rules that decide who gets a deceased-donor kidney, based on waiting time, matching, sensitization, and medical factors.	TRANSPLANT
Kidney cancer	Cancer that starts in the kidney, most often renal cell carcinoma. It is often found by chance on imaging.	DISEASE
Kidney donor profile index (KDPI)	A score from 0 to 100% that estimates how long a deceased-donor kidney is likely to function compared with other donors. Lower numbers predict longer function.	TRANSPLANT
Kidney failure	Kidney function so low (eGFR under 15) that dialysis or a transplant is needed to live. See End-stage kidney disease.	DISEASE
Kidney function	How well the kidneys filter waste, balance fluid and minerals, control blood pressure, and make hormones. Measured mainly by eGFR and urine albumin.	FUNCTION
Kidney paired donation	A swap in which a donor who does not match their intended recipient gives a kidney to another pair, and receives a match in return.	TRANSPLANT
Kidney stones	Hard deposits of minerals and salts that form in the kidney and can cause severe pain, blood in urine, and blockage. Types include calcium oxalate, uric acid, struvite, and cystine.	DISEASE
Kidney transplant	Surgery that places a healthy kidney from a living or deceased donor into a person with kidney failure. It is often the best treatment for suitable people.	TRANSPLANT
Kidney-friendly diet	An eating plan tailored to kidney function and treatment, which may limit sodium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, and fluids. See Renal diet.	NUTRITION
Kt/V	A number that measures how much urea is removed by dialysis relative to body water. A common goal for in-center hemodialysis is at least 1.2 per session.	DIALYSIS
KUB X-ray	A plain X-ray of the kidneys, ureters, and bladder, used to look for some kinds of stones.	IMAGING

L		
Lanthanum	A phosphate binder that is chewed with meals.	MEDICINE
Laparoscopic donor nephrectomy	Removing a kidney from a living donor through small cuts with a camera. It allows a shorter recovery than open surgery.	TRANSPLANT
Lithotripsy	A treatment that breaks kidney stones with shock waves or a laser. See ESWL and Uteroscopy.	PROCEDURE
Liver-kidney transplant (simultaneous)	Transplanting a liver and a kidney at the same time for people whose liver and kidneys have both failed.	TRANSPLANT
Living donor evaluation	A thorough medical and psychosocial screening to make sure donating is safe for the donor and likely to help the recipient.	TRANSPLANT
Loop diuretic	A strong water pill, such as furosemide or bumetanide, that acts on the loop of Henle.	MEDICINE
Loop of Henle	The U-shaped part of the nephron that creates a salt gradient in the medulla, allowing the kidney to concentrate urine.	ANATOMY
Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS)	Urinary symptoms such as weak stream, frequency, urgency, and nocturia, often from prostate enlargement or bladder problems.	SYMPTOM
Low-protein diet	A diet with less protein, sometimes prescribed in advanced CKD not on dialysis. It should be supervised by a dietitian to avoid malnutrition.	NUTRITION
Lupus nephritis	Kidney inflammation caused by systemic lupus erythematosus, which can lead to kidney failure without treatment.	DISEASE
Lymphocele	A collection of lymph fluid near a transplanted kidney that can press on the ureter or kidney.	TRANSPLANT
M		
Macula densa	A cluster of cells in the distal tubule that senses salt and signals the glomerulus to adjust filtration.	ANATOMY
Magnesium	A mineral needed for nerves and muscles. Levels can be too high in kidney failure and too low with some medicines.	TEST
Malnutrition (protein-energy wasting)	Loss of muscle and body stores from poor intake and inflammation, common in advanced CKD and dialysis.	DISEASE
Medical power of attorney	A legal paper naming a person to make health decisions for you if you cannot.	PEOPLE
Medicare ESRD benefit	Medicare coverage for people of any age with kidney failure needing dialysis or a transplant. Timing rules depend on the type of treatment.	PEOPLE
Medulla, renal	The inner part of the kidney, made of pyramid-shaped tissue that concentrates urine.	ANATOMY
Medullary sponge kidney	A birth condition with small cysts in the collecting ducts that increases the risk of stones.	GENETIC
Membrane (dialysis)	The thin, porous barrier in a dialyzer or the peritoneum that lets wastes and water pass while holding back blood cells and proteins.	DIALYSIS

Membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis (MPGN)	A pattern of glomerular injury with thickened walls and cell overgrowth, often from immune or complement problems.	DISEASE
Membranous nephropathy	A leading cause of nephrotic syndrome in adults, with thickened glomerular basement membranes. Often caused by antibodies to the PLA2R protein.	DISEASE
Mesangial cells	Support cells in the glomerulus that hold the capillaries together and clear debris.	ANATOMY
Metabolic acidosis	Too much acid in the blood, with low bicarbonate, common in advanced CKD. It is treated with sodium bicarbonate and diet changes.	DISEASE
Metformin	A common type 2 diabetes medicine. It is usually safe when kidney function is adequate, but dose is reduced or stopped when eGFR is low.	MEDICINE
Microalbuminuria	An older term for a small but abnormal amount of albumin in urine (30 to 300 mg/g). Now called moderately increased albuminuria (A2).	TEST
Microscopic hematuria	Blood in the urine that can only be seen under a microscope or on a dipstick.	SYMPTOM
Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist (MRA)	A medicine class, including spironolactone and finerenone, that blocks aldosterone. It can lower blood pressure and protect the kidneys but can raise potassium.	MEDICINE
Minimal change disease	A common cause of nephrotic syndrome in children, with normal-looking glomeruli on routine microscopy. It usually responds to steroids.	DISEASE
Missed treatments (dialysis)	Skipped or shortened dialysis sessions, which raise the risk of hospitalization and death. Call your unit to reschedule right away.	DIALYSIS
MR angiography	An MRI technique that shows the renal arteries without X-rays.	IMAGING
mTOR inhibitor	An anti-rejection medicine, such as sirolimus or everolimus, that can be used instead of calcineurin inhibitors but may cause sores and protein in urine.	MEDICINE
Multiple myeloma kidney (cast nephropathy)	Kidney injury from abnormal proteins made by myeloma that clog the tubules.	DISEASE
Mycophenolate	An anti-rejection medicine that blocks immune cell growth. Often taken with tacrolimus and prednisone after transplant. It can cause diarrhea and is harmful in pregnancy.	MEDICINE

N

Nausea (uremic)	Queasiness from waste buildup in advanced kidney failure, often improving with dialysis.	SYMPTOM
Nephrectomy	Surgery to remove all or part of a kidney, for cancer, a nonfunctioning kidney, or donation.	PROCEDURE
Nephritic syndrome	A pattern of glomerular inflammation with blood in the urine, high blood pressure, swelling, and reduced kidney function.	DISEASE
Nephritis	Inflammation of the kidney.	DISEASE

Nephrocalcinosis	Calcium deposits in the kidney tissue, which can reduce function.	DISEASE
Nephrogenic systemic fibrosis	A rare, serious skin and organ scarring condition caused by some gadolinium MRI dyes in people with severe kidney failure. Newer dyes are much safer.	DISEASE
Nephrolithiasis	The medical word for kidney stones.	DISEASE
Nephrologist	A doctor who specializes in kidney diseases, dialysis, and transplant medicine.	PEOPLE
Nephrology	The branch of medicine that deals with the kidneys, dialysis, and transplant.	PEOPLE
Nephrology nurse	A nurse who specializes in caring for people with kidney disease, dialysis, and transplant.	PEOPLE
Nephron	The working unit of the kidney: a glomerulus and its tubule. Each kidney has about a million.	ANATOMY
Nephropathy	Any disease of the kidney.	DISEASE
Nephrostomy tube	A thin tube placed through the skin into the kidney to drain urine when the ureter is blocked.	PROCEDURE
Nephrotic syndrome	A group of findings: heavy protein loss in urine, low blood albumin, swelling, and high cholesterol. It has many causes.	DISEASE
Nephrotoxic	Toxic to the kidneys. Examples include NSAIDs, some antibiotics, contrast dye, and certain herbal products.	DISEASE
Neurogenic bladder	A bladder that does not empty normally because of nerve damage, such as from spinal cord injury or diabetes.	DISEASE
Nocturia	Waking at night to urinate.	SYMPTOM
Nocturnal hemodialysis	Long, slower hemodialysis done overnight, at home or in a center, which can allow better control of fluid and phosphorus.	DIALYSIS
NSAIDs	Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen. They can reduce kidney blood flow and injure kidneys, so they are usually avoided in CKD.	MEDICINE
Nuclear renal scan	An imaging test using a small amount of radioactive tracer to show how well each kidney works and drains.	IMAGING

O

Obstruction, urinary	A blockage of urine flow by a stone, tumor, enlarged prostate, or scarring, which can damage the kidney.	DISEASE
Obstructive uropathy	Kidney damage from urine that cannot drain.	DISEASE
Oliguria	Low urine output, less than about 400 mL a day in an adult.	SYMPTOM
Opportunistic infection	An infection that occurs because the immune system is suppressed, such as CMV, BK virus, or fungal infections.	TRANSPLANT
OPTN / UNOS	The Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, run by the United Network for Organ Sharing, which manages the national organ waiting list and matching in the United States.	TRANSPLANT
Organ procurement organization (OPO)	A regional group that works with hospitals and families to recover organs from donors and deliver them to transplant centers.	TRANSPLANT

Orthostatic proteinuria	Protein in urine only when upright, common in teens and usually harmless.	SYMPTOM
Osmolality	The concentration of dissolved particles in blood or urine. The kidneys adjust urine osmolality to balance body water.	FUNCTION
Osmosis	The movement of water across a membrane toward a higher concentration of dissolved particles, used in peritoneal dialysis with dextrose or icodextrin.	DIALYSIS
Osteodystrophy, renal	Bone disease of CKD, caused by abnormal calcium, phosphorus, vitamin D, and PTH. See CKD-MBD.	DISEASE
Overactive bladder	A syndrome of urgency, frequency, and sometimes leakage.	DISEASE
Oxalate	A natural compound in some foods (spinach, nuts, tea, chocolate) that can form calcium oxalate kidney stones.	NUTRITION

P

Palliative care	Specialized care that relieves symptoms and stress of serious illness at any stage, alongside other treatment.	PEOPLE
Panel reactive antibody (PRA)	A measure of how many potential donors a patient has antibodies against. A high PRA means fewer compatible donors.	TRANSPLANT
Papilla, renal	The tip of each renal pyramid, where urine drips into a calyx.	ANATOMY
Parathyroid hormone (PTH)	A hormone from the parathyroid glands that controls calcium and phosphorus. PTH rises in CKD and is monitored to protect bones.	TEST
Parathyroidectomy	Surgery to remove overactive parathyroid glands, for severe secondary hyperparathyroidism that medicines cannot control.	PROCEDURE
Patient care technician (dialysis)	A trained staff member who sets up machines, starts and ends treatments, and monitors patients in a dialysis unit.	PEOPLE
PD fluid (dialysate)	The sterile solution run into the belly during peritoneal dialysis. It contains dextrose or icodextrin to draw out fluid.	DIALYSIS
Pelvis, renal	The funnel-shaped area where the calyces meet and urine collects before entering the ureter.	ANATOMY
Pericarditis, uremic	Inflammation of the lining of the heart from waste buildup in kidney failure. Dialysis usually treats it.	DISEASE
Peripheral neuropathy	Numbness, tingling, or burning in the hands and feet from nerve damage, common with diabetes and advanced kidney failure.	SYMPTOM
Peritoneal dialysis (PD)	A home dialysis method in which fluid is placed in the belly through a catheter, and the lining of the belly (peritoneum) filters wastes and extra fluid.	DIALYSIS
Peritoneal equilibration test (PET)	A test that shows how quickly the peritoneal membrane moves wastes and water, used to tailor peritoneal dialysis.	DIALYSIS
Peritoneal membrane	The thin lining of the abdomen, used as the filter in peritoneal dialysis.	DIALYSIS
Peritonitis (PD)	Infection of the peritoneum in people on peritoneal dialysis, causing cloudy fluid and belly pain. It needs prompt treatment.	DIALYSIS
Phosphate additives	Phosphorus-containing additives in processed foods, colas, and deli meats. They are absorbed almost completely, so they raise blood phosphorus more than natural food phosphorus.	NUTRITION

Phosphate binder	A medicine taken with meals that binds phosphorus in food so less is absorbed. Examples: sevelamer, lanthanum, calcium acetate, ferric citrate.	MEDICINE
Phosphorus	A mineral in bones and many foods. Kidney failure lets it build up, which harms bones and blood vessels.	TEST
Plant-based diet	An eating pattern focused on vegetables, fruit, grains, and legumes. It can be used in CKD with dietitian guidance for potassium and phosphorus.	NUTRITION
Plasmapheresis	A procedure that removes the liquid part of blood (plasma) to clear harmful antibodies, used in some kidney diseases and before some transplants.	PROCEDURE
Podocyte	A specialized cell that wraps around glomerular capillaries and forms the final barrier that keeps protein in the blood.	ANATOMY
Polycystic kidney disease (PKD)	An inherited disease in which many cysts grow in the kidneys. See ADPKD and ARPKD.	GENETIC
Polyuria	Passing large amounts of urine.	SYMPTOM
Post-renal AKI	AKI caused by a blockage of urine flow out of the kidneys.	DISEASE
Post-transplant diabetes	Diabetes that develops after transplant, partly because of anti-rejection medicines such as steroids and tacrolimus.	TRANSPLANT
Potassium	A mineral that controls heart and muscle function. Kidneys remove extra potassium; levels that are too high or too low can be dangerous.	TEST
Potassium binder	A medicine, such as patiomer or sodium zirconium cyclosilicate, that binds potassium in the gut to lower blood levels.	MEDICINE
Potassium-sparing diuretic	A water pill, such as spironolactone or amiloride, that does not waste potassium and can raise blood potassium.	MEDICINE
Prednisone	A corticosteroid used to treat many kidney diseases and to prevent rejection.	MEDICINE
Preeclampsia	A pregnancy condition of high blood pressure and protein in the urine. CKD raises the risk.	DISEASE
Preemptive transplant	A kidney transplant done before dialysis is needed. It is associated with the best outcomes.	TRANSPLANT
Pre-renal AKI	AKI caused by poor blood flow to the kidneys, from dehydration, bleeding, low blood pressure, or heart failure.	DISEASE
Prostate	A gland below the bladder in men. Enlargement (BPH) can block urine flow.	ANATOMY
Protein (dietary)	A nutrient needed to build and repair muscle. Needs change with CKD stage: often somewhat limited before dialysis and higher on dialysis. A dietitian sets your target.	NUTRITION
Protein-to-creatinine ratio (UPCR)	A urine test that estimates total protein loss from a single sample.	TEST
Proteinuria	Protein in the urine, a sign of kidney damage. See Albuminuria and UPCR.	SYMPTOM
Proximal tubule	The first part of the tubule after the glomerulus, which reabsorbs most of the filtered water, sodium, glucose, and amino acids.	ANATOMY

Pruritus, uremic	Itching from kidney failure, often severe and worse at night. It can improve with better dialysis, phosphorus control, and medicines.	SYMPTOM
Pyelonephritis	A kidney infection, usually from bacteria that travel up from the bladder. It causes fever, flank pain, and chills.	DISEASE
Pyramid, renal	A cone-shaped piece of medulla that carries urine toward the calyces.	ANATOMY

R

Rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis (RPGN)	Glomerular inflammation that causes kidney function to fall quickly over days to weeks. It is an emergency that needs prompt biopsy and treatment.	DISEASE
Reabsorption	Movement of useful substances such as water, sodium, glucose, and amino acids from the tubule back into the blood.	FUNCTION
Recipient	The person who receives a transplanted organ.	TRANSPLANT
Reflux, vesicoureteral	Backward flow of urine from the bladder up the ureter toward the kidney, which can cause infections and kidney scarring, mainly in children.	DISEASE
Rejection	When the immune system attacks a transplanted organ. See Acute rejection, Antibody-mediated rejection, and Chronic rejection.	TRANSPLANT
Renal	Relating to the kidneys, from the Latin ren.	ANATOMY
Renal artery	The artery that brings blood from the aorta to each kidney. The kidneys receive about a fifth of the heart's output.	ANATOMY
Renal artery stenosis	Narrowing of a renal artery that can cause high blood pressure and reduced kidney function.	DISEASE
Renal cell carcinoma	The most common kidney cancer, starting in the tubule cells.	DISEASE
Renal colic	Severe, wave-like flank pain caused by a stone moving in the ureter.	SYMPTOM
Renal corpuscle	The filtering unit of a nephron: the glomerulus and Bowman capsule.	ANATOMY
Renal diet	An eating plan for kidney disease that may limit sodium, potassium, phosphorus, fluid, and protein depending on stage and treatment.	NUTRITION
Renal dosing	Adjusting medicine doses for reduced kidney function so drugs do not build up to harmful levels.	MEDICINE
Renal failure	Loss of kidney function, acute or chronic.	DISEASE
Renal function panel	A set of blood tests that includes creatinine, BUN, electrolytes, calcium, phosphorus, and albumin.	TEST
Renal replacement therapy	Treatments that replace kidney function: hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and kidney transplant.	DIALYSIS
Renal sinus	The space inside the kidney around the hilum containing the pelvis, calyces, vessels, and fat.	ANATOMY
Renal tubular acidosis (RTA)	A group of conditions in which the tubules cannot remove acid or hold bicarbonate properly, causing acidosis.	DISEASE

Renal ultrasound	A painless test that uses sound waves to show kidney size, cysts, stones, and swelling from blockage, with no radiation or dye.	IMAGING
Renal vein	The vein that carries filtered blood from each kidney to the inferior vena cava.	ANATOMY
Renal vein thrombosis	A blood clot in a renal vein, which can cause flank pain, blood in urine, and loss of kidney function.	DISEASE
Renin	An enzyme released by the kidneys when blood pressure or sodium is low, starting the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system.	FUNCTION
Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS)	A hormone chain that raises blood pressure and holds salt and water. ACE inhibitors, ARBs, and MRAs act on it.	FUNCTION
Residual kidney function	Kidney function and urine output that remain after starting dialysis. Protecting it improves outcomes.	DIALYSIS
Restless legs syndrome	An urge to move the legs, especially at night, common in kidney failure and iron deficiency.	SYMPTOM
Re-transplant	A second or later kidney transplant after an earlier graft has failed.	TRANSPLANT
Retrograde pyelogram	An X-ray in which dye is placed through a cystoscope into the ureter to outline the collecting system.	IMAGING
Reverse osmosis	The water purification process used to make dialysis water safe by removing minerals and contaminants.	DIALYSIS
Rhabdomyolysis	Breakdown of muscle that releases proteins (myoglobin) that can clog the kidneys and cause AKI.	DISEASE
Rituximab	An antibody medicine that depletes B cells, used in membranous nephropathy, ANCA vasculitis, and some other kidney diseases.	MEDICINE

S

Saline	A salt-water solution given by vein to restore fluid, used carefully in kidney disease.	PROCEDURE
Salt substitutes	Products that replace sodium chloride with potassium chloride. They can raise potassium to dangerous levels in CKD.	NUTRITION
Scleroderma renal crisis	A sudden severe rise in blood pressure with kidney failure in people with systemic sclerosis, treated with ACE inhibitors.	DISEASE
Secondary hyperparathyroidism	See Hyperparathyroidism, secondary.	DISEASE
Segmental arteries	Branches of the renal artery that supply the kidney segments.	ANATOMY
Serum creatinine	See Creatinine.	TEST
Sevelamer	A calcium-free phosphate binder taken with meals.	MEDICINE
SGLT2 inhibitor	A class of medicines (dapagliflozin, empagliflozin, canagliflozin) that make the kidneys remove glucose and protect the kidneys and heart in CKD.	MEDICINE
Shared decision-making	A process in which you and your care team review options and choose a plan that fits your values and goals.	PEOPLE

Sick-day rules	Advice to temporarily hold certain medicines, such as ACE inhibitors, ARBs, SGLT2 inhibitors, diuretics, metformin, and NSAIDs, during vomiting, diarrhea, or dehydration to protect the kidneys.	MEDICINE
Sickle cell nephropathy	Kidney damage caused by sickle cell disease, with protein in the urine and difficulty concentrating urine.	DISEASE
Sirolimus	An mTOR inhibitor anti-rejection medicine.	MEDICINE
Social worker	A professional who helps with emotional support, insurance, transportation, and other practical needs in kidney care.	PEOPLE
Sodium	A mineral that controls body water and blood pressure. Kidneys adjust sodium in urine; too much salt raises blood pressure and thirst.	TEST
Sodium bicarbonate	A medicine (baking soda in tablet form) that treats metabolic acidosis in CKD.	MEDICINE
Sodium restriction	Limiting salt, often to about 2,000 mg of sodium a day, to help control blood pressure and fluid.	NUTRITION
Solitary kidney	Having only one kidney, from birth or surgery. Most people with a healthy solitary kidney live normally, with regular monitoring.	ANATOMY
Specific gravity	A urine test of how concentrated the urine is.	TEST
Staghorn calculus	A large kidney stone that fills the collecting system, often linked with chronic infection.	DISEASE
Statins	Cholesterol-lowering medicines that reduce heart risk in CKD and are generally safe.	MEDICINE
Steal syndrome	Reduced blood flow to the hand after an arm fistula or graft is placed, causing cold, painful, or numb fingers. It needs prompt attention.	DIALYSIS
Stent, ureteral	A thin tube placed in the ureter to keep it open and drain urine past a stone or after surgery.	PROCEDURE
Struvite stone	A stone formed in infected urine, sometimes growing very large.	DISEASE
Support group	A regular gathering of people with a shared experience for mutual help and encouragement. TLHF offers kidney and liver support groups.	PEOPLE
Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)	An autoimmune disease that can attack the kidneys (lupus nephritis), skin, joints, and other organs.	DISEASE

T

Tacrolimus	The most widely used anti-rejection medicine after kidney transplant. Blood levels are checked often; many drugs and foods, such as grapefruit, interact with it.	MEDICINE
Thiazide diuretic	A water pill, such as chlorthalidone or hydrochlorothiazide, used for blood pressure and to lower calcium stone risk.	MEDICINE
Thirst	The urge to drink. On dialysis, salt and high blood sugar increase thirst and fluid gain.	SYMPTOM
Thrill	The buzzing feeling you can feel over a working fistula or graft. A missing thrill needs urgent attention.	DIALYSIS

Thrombotic microangiopathy (TMA)	Small blood clots in tiny vessels that damage the kidneys, as in HUS and TTP.	DISEASE
Thymoglobulin	Rabbit antithymocyte globulin, an induction or rejection treatment that depletes T cells.	MEDICINE
Tolvaptan	A medicine that blocks vasopressin. Used to slow kidney enlargement in selected adults with polycystic kidney disease, with liver monitoring.	MEDICINE
Total kidney volume	The combined size of both kidneys on imaging, used to predict the course of polycystic kidney disease.	IMAGING
Transferrin saturation (TSAT)	A measure of how much iron is available to make red blood cells, used with ferritin to check iron stores in CKD.	TEST
Transient dialysis	Short-term dialysis treatment at a center away from home, for travelers.	DIALYSIS
Transmembrane pressure	The pressure across the dialyzer membrane that controls how much fluid is removed.	DIALYSIS
Transplant center	A hospital program that evaluates patients, performs transplants, and provides long-term follow-up.	TRANSPLANT
Transplant coordinator	A nurse or specialist who guides patients through evaluation, waiting, surgery, and follow-up.	PEOPLE
Transplant evaluation	A set of tests and meetings to decide whether a transplant is safe and appropriate, including medical, surgical, and social review.	TRANSPLANT
Transplant waiting list	The national list of people waiting for a kidney. Waiting time usually starts when dialysis begins or eGFR falls to 20 or below.	TRANSPLANT
Tubule	The long tube of the nephron that reabsorbs water and minerals from the filtrate and secretes waste, turning it into urine.	ANATOMY
Tubulointerstitial disease	Diseases that mainly affect the tubules and surrounding tissue, from drugs, infections, or immune causes.	DISEASE
Tumor lysis syndrome	Release of cell contents from rapidly dying cancer cells that can injure the kidneys.	DISEASE

U

UACR (urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio)	A urine test that measures albumin relative to creatinine. Under 30 mg/g is normal; 30 to 300 is moderately increased; above 300 is severely increased.	TEST
Ultrafiltration	The removal of extra fluid from the blood during dialysis by pressure across the membrane.	DIALYSIS
Urea	The main waste product of protein breakdown, made in the liver and removed by the kidneys.	FUNCTION
Urea reduction ratio (URR)	The percentage by which a dialysis session lowers blood urea. A common goal is 65% or more.	DIALYSIS
Uremia	The syndrome of waste buildup in kidney failure, causing nausea, itching, tiredness, confusion, and a metallic taste. It improves with dialysis.	DISEASE
Uremic toxins	Waste products that build up in kidney failure and contribute to symptoms such as nausea, itching, and tiredness.	FUNCTION

Ureter	A thin muscular tube that carries urine from each kidney to the bladder, about 10 to 12 inches long.	ANATOMY
Ureteroscopy	A procedure with a thin scope passed through the bladder into the ureter to see and treat stones or blockages.	PROCEDURE
Urethra	The tube that carries urine out of the bladder.	ANATOMY
Urgency (urinary)	A sudden, strong need to urinate.	SYMPTOM
Urgent-start peritoneal dialysis	Starting peritoneal dialysis soon after catheter placement, within days, for people who need dialysis quickly.	DIALYSIS
Uric acid	A waste product from purines. High levels can cause gout and uric acid stones, and are associated with CKD.	TEST
Uric acid stone	A stone formed in acidic urine with high uric acid. Often treatable by making urine less acidic.	DISEASE
Urinalysis	A set of urine tests, including dipstick and microscopy, that look for blood, protein, glucose, cells, and infection.	TEST
Urinary tract infection (UTI)	An infection of the bladder, ureters, or kidneys, usually by bacteria. Causes burning, frequency, and sometimes fever and flank pain.	DISEASE
Urine culture	A test that grows bacteria from urine to identify an infection and the best antibiotic.	TEST
Urine output	The amount of urine produced, usually about 1 to 2 liters a day in adults. Tracking it is part of kidney care.	SYMPTOM
Urologist	A surgeon who specializes in the urinary tract, including stones, prostate, bladder, and kidney surgery.	PEOPLE

V

Vaccination (kidney-related)	Vaccines for flu, pneumonia, COVID-19, hepatitis B, and others are important in CKD, dialysis, and transplant. Some live vaccines are avoided after transplant.	MEDICINE
Vascular access	See Access, vascular.	DIALYSIS
Vasculitis	Inflammation of blood vessels, which can injure the kidneys.	DISEASE
Vasopressin (ADH)	A hormone that tells the collecting ducts to hold water, concentrating urine.	FUNCTION
Vein mapping	An ultrasound of arm veins and arteries, done before access surgery to choose the best place for a fistula or graft.	IMAGING
Vein preservation	Protecting arm veins from needle sticks and IV lines so they are available for future dialysis access.	DIALYSIS
Venous stenosis	Narrowing of the vein of a fistula or graft, often the cause of poor flow or clotting.	DIALYSIS
Vesicoureteral reflux	See Reflux, vesicoureteral.	DISEASE
Vitamin D (active)	Calcitriol or a related medicine that replaces the active vitamin D kidneys cannot make in CKD.	NUTRITION
Voiding cystourethrogram (VCUG)	An X-ray of the bladder and urethra during urination, used to look for reflux and blockages, mainly in children.	IMAGING

Volume overload	Too much fluid in the body, causing swelling, high blood pressure, and breathlessness.	DISEASE
Von Hippel-Lindau disease	An inherited condition with tumors and cysts in the kidneys, brain, and other organs, with a high risk of kidney cancer.	GENETIC

W

Waiting list	See Transplant waiting list.	TRANSPLANT
Warm ischemia	The time a donor organ is without blood flow at body temperature, which can damage the organ.	TRANSPLANT
Waste products	Substances such as urea, creatinine, and acids that the kidneys remove from blood.	FUNCTION
Water treatment (dialysis)	The purification of tap water to very high standards before it is used to make dialysate.	DIALYSIS
Wilms tumor	The most common kidney cancer in children.	DISEASE

X

Xenotransplantation	Transplanting organs from animals, such as genetically modified pigs, into humans. It is experimental, with early clinical studies under way.	TRANSPLANT
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Z

Zinc	A trace mineral. Low zinc can occur in dialysis and may affect taste and healing; supplements should be guided by your care team.	NUTRITION
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PART 2

Reference Sections

Common abbreviations and acronyms

ACE	Angiotensin-converting enzyme	HDF	Hemodiafiltration
ACR / UACR	Albumin-to-creatinine ratio (urine)	HLA	Human leukocyte antigen
ADH	Antidiuretic hormone (vasopressin)	HUS	Hemolytic uremic syndrome
ADPKD	Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease	IDWG	Interdialytic weight gain
AIN	Acute interstitial nephritis	IFTA	Interstitial fibrosis and tubular atrophy
AKI	Acute kidney injury	IgAN	IgA nephropathy
ANCA	Anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody	IV	Intravenous
APD	Automated peritoneal dialysis	IVP	Intravenous pyelogram
ARB	Angiotensin II receptor blocker	KAS	Kidney allocation system
ARPKD	Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease	KDIGO	Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes
ATN	Acute tubular necrosis	KDPI	Kidney donor profile index
AVF	Arteriovenous fistula	KDOQI	Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative

AVG	Arteriovenous graft	KUB	Kidneys, ureters, and bladder (plain X-ray)
BMP / CMP	Basic / comprehensive metabolic panel	Kt/V	Dialysis adequacy measure (clearance times time over volume)
BP	Blood pressure	LDKT	Living donor kidney transplant
BUN	Blood urea nitrogen	MPGN	Membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis
CAKUT	Congenital anomalies of the kidney and urinary tract	MRA	Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist; also magnetic resonance angiography
CAPD	Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis	MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
CCPD	Continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis	NSAID	Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug
CKD	Chronic kidney disease	OPO	Organ procurement organization
CKD-EPI	Chronic Kidney Disease Epidemiology Collaboration equation	OPTN	Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network
CKD-MBD	CKD mineral and bone disorder	PCT	Patient care technician
CMV	Cytomegalovirus	PD	Peritoneal dialysis
CRRT	Continuous renal replacement therapy	PET	Peritoneal equilibration test
CT	Computed tomography	PKD	Polycystic kidney disease
DCD	Donation after circulatory death	PRA	Panel reactive antibody
DGF	Delayed graft function	PTH	Parathyroid hormone
DKD	Diabetic kidney disease	RAAS	Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system
DSA	Donor-specific antibody	RRT	Renal replacement therapy
DVT	Deep vein thrombosis	RTA	Renal tubular acidosis
eGFR	Estimated glomerular filtration rate	SGLT2	Sodium-glucose cotransporter 2
EPO	Erythropoietin	SLE	Systemic lupus erythematosus
ESA	Erythropoiesis-stimulating agent	TMA	Thrombotic microangiopathy
ESKD / ESRD	End-stage kidney disease / end-stage renal disease	TSAT	Transferrin saturation
ESWL	Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy	UNOS	United Network for Organ Sharing
FGF23	Fibroblast growth factor 23	UPCR	Urine protein-to-creatinine ratio
FSGS	Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis	URR	Urea reduction ratio
GBM	Glomerular basement membrane	UTI	Urinary tract infection
GFR	Glomerular filtration rate	VCUG	Voiding cystourethrogram
GLP-1 RA	Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist	VUR	Vesicoureteral reflux
HD	Hemodialysis		

Word parts: how to decode kidney terms

Most medical words are built from small pieces. Learning a few makes many terms easier to understand.

Word part	Meaning	Examples
nephr-, nephro-	kidney	nephrology, nephron, nephritis
ren-, reno-	kidney	renal, adrenal
glomerul-	the filter tuft	glomerulus, glomerulonephritis
-uria	in the urine	hematuria, proteinuria
hemat-, hemo-	blood	hematuria, hemodialysis
albumin-	the protein albumin	albuminuria
olig-	few or scanty	oliguria
an-, a-	without	anuria
poly-	many or much	polyuria, polycystic
noct-	night	nocturia
dys-	painful or difficult	dysuria
azot-	nitrogen	azotemia
ur-, uro-	urine or urinary tract	uremia, urology
-emia	in the blood	uremia, hyperkalemia
hyper- / hypo-	too high / too low	hyperkalemia, hypocalcemia
pyel-	renal pelvis	pyelonephritis, pyelogram
ureter-	ureter	ureteroscopy
urethr-	urethra	urethra, urethritis
cyst-	bladder, or a cyst	cystitis, cystoscopy
-lith-	stone	nephrolithiasis, lithotripsy
-itis	inflammation	nephritis, cystitis
-osis	abnormal condition	acidosis, glomerulosclerosis
-pathy	disease	nephropathy, neuropathy
-ectomy	surgical removal	nephrectomy
-ostomy	making an opening	nephrostomy
-plasty	repair or reshaping	pyeloplasty
-gram, -graphy	picture, imaging	pyelogram, urography
-scopy	looking inside with a scope	cystoscopy
dia-, -lysis	through; breaking down	dialysis
trans-	across or through	transplant
allo-	other (from another person)	allograft
peri-	around	peritoneal, perinephric
-toxic	poisonous	nephrotoxic

CKD stages at a glance

Chronic kidney disease is staged by **eGFR** (how well the kidneys filter, in mL/min per 1.73 m²) and by **albuminuria** (protein leak). Both numbers together show your level of risk.

Stage	eGFR	Kidney function	What it often means
G1	90 or higher	Normal or high	Damage present (for example albuminuria), filtering normal
G2	60 to 89	Mildly decreased	Often no symptoms
G3a	45 to 59	Mildly to moderately decreased	Anemia and bone changes may begin
G3b	30 to 44	Moderately to severely decreased	Higher risk of complications
G4	15 to 29	Severely decreased	Prepare for dialysis or transplant
G5	Under 15	Kidney failure	Dialysis or transplant needed

Albuminuria	UACR	Meaning
A1	Under 30 mg/g	Normal to mildly increased
A2	30 to 300 mg/g	Moderately increased
A3	Over 300 mg/g	Severely increased

Kidney tests at a glance

Normal ranges differ by laboratory, age, and sex, so ask your care team what is normal for you. Kidney tests are most useful when repeated over time.

Test	What it reflects	Good to know
Creatinine	Waste from muscle	Rises when kidney function falls; affected by muscle mass and diet.
eGFR	Estimated filtering rate	The main number for staging CKD; based on creatinine, age, and sex.
BUN	Urea waste	Also rises with dehydration, bleeding, and high protein intake.
Cystatin C	Another filtration marker	Less affected by muscle; used to confirm eGFR.
UACR	Albumin leak in urine	Early sign of kidney damage; repeat to confirm.
UPCR	Total protein in urine	Useful when protein loss is heavy.
Urinalysis	Blood, protein, cells, infection	Dipstick plus microscope.
Potassium	Mineral balance	High values can affect the heart.
Sodium	Body water balance	Reflects water more than salt intake.
Bicarbonate (CO₂)	Acid-base balance	Low in metabolic acidosis.
Calcium, phosphorus	Mineral and bone health	Phosphorus rises in advanced CKD.
PTH	Parathyroid activity	Rises in CKD and affects bones.
Hemoglobin	Red blood cells	Low in anemia of CKD.
Ferritin, TSAT	Iron stores	Guide iron treatment.

Test	What it reflects	Good to know
A1c	Average blood sugar	Key in diabetic kidney disease.
Renal ultrasound	Size, cysts, blockage, stones	No radiation or dye.
Kidney biopsy	Microscopic cause of damage	Guides treatment of many kidney diseases.

Terms by category

Use these lists to explore related terms. Look up any name in the A to Z section.

Anatomy (39 terms)

Afferent arteriole · Arcuate arteries · Basement membrane (glomerular) · Bladder · Bowman capsule · Calyx (calyces) · Collecting duct · Cortex, renal · Distal convoluted tubule · Efferent arteriole · Gerota fascia · Glomerulus · Hilum, renal · Interlobar arteries · Interstitium · Juxtaglomerular apparatus · Juxtamedullary nephron · Kidney · Loop of Henle · Macula densa · Medulla, renal · Mesangial cells · Nephron · Papilla, renal · Pelvis, renal · Podocyte · Prostate · Proximal tubule · Pyramid, renal · Renal · Renal artery · Renal corpuscle · Renal sinus · Renal vein · Segmental arteries · Solitary kidney · Tubule · Ureter · Urethra

Function (21 terms)

Acid-base balance · Aldosterone · Angiotensin · Clearance · Complement · Diuresis · Electrolytes · Erythropoietin (EPO) · Excretion · FGF23 · Filtration · Hyperfiltration · Kidney function · Osmolality · Reabsorption · Renin · Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS) · Urea · Uremic toxins · Vasopressin (ADH) · Waste products

Disease (104 terms)

Acute interstitial nephritis (AIN) · Acute kidney injury (AKI) · Acute tubular necrosis (ATN) · Amyloidosis · Analgesic nephropathy · ANCA vasculitis · Anemia of CKD · Anti-GBM disease · Asymptomatic bacteriuria · Atheroembolic renal disease · Bacteriuria · Bladder outlet obstruction · Calciophylaxis · Calcium oxalate stone · Cardiorenal syndrome · Chronic kidney disease (CKD) · CKD stages · CKD-MBD (mineral and bone disorder) · Contrast-associated AKI · Crescentic glomerulonephritis · Cyst, kidney · Cystitis · Dehydration · Diabetes insipidus · Diabetic kidney disease (DKD) · Dialysis disequilibrium syndrome · Electrolyte imbalance · End-stage kidney disease (ESKD) · Fanconi syndrome · Fluid overload · Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) · Glomerulonephritis · Gout · Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) · Hepatorenal syndrome · HIV-associated nephropathy (HIVAN) · Hydronephrosis · Hypercalcemia · Hyperkalemia · Hyperparathyroidism, secondary · Hyperphosphatemia · Hypertension · Hypertensive nephrosclerosis · Hyperuricemia · Hypocalcemia · Hypokalemia · Hyponatremia · Hypotension, intradialytic · IgA nephropathy · Interstitial cystitis · Iron deficiency · Ischemic nephropathy · Kidney cancer · Kidney failure · Kidney stones · Lupus nephritis · Malnutrition (protein-energy wasting) · Membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis (MPGN) · Membranous nephropathy · Metabolic acidosis · Minimal change disease · Multiple myeloma kidney (cast nephropathy) · Nephritic syndrome · Nephritis · Nephrocalcinosis · Nephrogenic systemic fibrosis · Nephrolithiasis · Nephropathy · Nephrotic syndrome · Nephrotoxic · Neurogenic bladder · Obstruction, urinary · Obstructive uropathy · Osteodystrophy, renal · Overactive bladder · Pericarditis, uremic · Post-renal AKI · Preeclampsia · Pre-renal AKI · Pyelonephritis · Rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis (RPGN) · Reflux, vesicoureteral · Renal artery stenosis · Renal cell carcinoma · Renal failure · Renal tubular acidosis (RTA) · Renal vein thrombosis · Rhabdomyolysis · Scleroderma renal crisis · Secondary hyperparathyroidism · Sickle cell nephropathy · Staghorn calculus · Struvite stone · Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) · Thrombotic microangiopathy (TMA) · Tubulointerstitial disease · Tumor lysis syndrome · Uremia · Uric acid stone · Urinary tract infection (UTI) · Vasculitis · Vesicoureteral reflux · Volume overload · Wilms tumor

Symptom (29 terms)

Albuminuria · Anuria · Azotemia · Cramps, muscle · Dysuria · Edema · Fatigue · Flank pain · Foamy urine · Frequency (urinary) · Glucosuria · Gross hematuria · Hematuria · Incontinence, urinary · Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) · Microscopic hematuria · Nausea (uremic) · Nocturia · Oliguria · Orthostatic proteinuria · Peripheral neuropathy · Polyuria · Proteinuria · Pruritus, uremic · Renal colic · Restless legs syndrome · Thirst · Urgency (urinary) · Urine output

Test (34 terms)

24-hour urine collection · Albumin · Anion gap · Bicarbonate · Blood pressure · Blood urea nitrogen (BUN) · Calcium · Cast (urine) · CKD-EPI equation · Creatinine · Creatinine clearance · Cystatin C · Dipstick (urine) · eGFR (estimated glomerular filtration rate) · Ferritin · Genetic testing · Glomerular filtration rate (GFR) · Hemoglobin · Hemoglobin A1c · Magnesium · Microalbuminuria · Parathyroid hormone (PTH) · Phosphorus · Potassium · Protein-to-creatinine ratio (UPCR) · Renal function panel · Serum creatinine · Sodium · Specific gravity · Transferrin saturation (TSAT) · UACR (urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio) · Uric acid · Urinalysis · Urine culture

Imaging (11 terms)

Computed tomography (CT) · Contrast dye · Intravenous pyelogram (IVP) · KUB X-ray · MR angiography · Nuclear renal scan · Renal ultrasound · Retrograde pyelogram · Total kidney volume · Vein mapping · Voiding cystourethrogram (VCUG)

Procedure (13 terms)

Biopsy, kidney · Catheter, urinary · Cystoscopy · Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) · Indwelling catheter · Lithotripsy · Nephrectomy · Nephrostomy tube · Parathyroidectomy · Plasmapheresis · Saline · Stent, ureteral · Ureteroscopy

Medicine (43 terms)

ACE inhibitor · ARB (angiotensin II receptor blocker) · Azathioprine · Belatacept · Calcimimetic · Calcineurin inhibitor · Calcitriol · Corticosteroids · Cyclosporine · Dapagliflozin · Diuretic · Empagliflozin · Erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA) · Finerenone · Furosemide · GLP-1 receptor agonist · Heparin · Immunosuppressants · Iron therapy (IV iron) · Lanthanum · Loop diuretic · Metformin · Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist (MRA) · mTOR inhibitor · Mycophenolate · NSAIDs · Phosphate binder · Potassium binder · Potassium-sparing diuretic · Prednisone · Renal dosing · Rituximab · Sevelamer · SGLT2 inhibitor · Sick-day rules · Sirolimus · Sodium bicarbonate · Statins · Tacrolimus · Thiazide diuretic · Thymoglobulin · Tolvaptan · Vaccination (kidney-related)

Nutrition (15 terms)

DASH diet · Exercise · Fluid restriction · Hydration · Kidney-friendly diet · Low-protein diet · Oxalate · Phosphate additives · Plant-based diet · Protein (dietary) · Renal diet · Salt substitutes · Sodium restriction · Vitamin D (active) · Zinc

Transplant (41 terms)

Acute rejection · Antibody-mediated rejection · BK virus · Chronic allograft nephropathy · Chronic rejection · Cold ischemia time · Crossmatch · Cytomegalovirus (CMV) · Deceased donor · Delayed graft function · Desensitization · Donation after circulatory death (DCD) · Donor, living · Donor-specific antibody (DSA) · Graft · Graft failure · HLA (human leukocyte antigen) · Induction therapy · Kidney allocation system (KAS) · Kidney donor profile index (KDPI) · Kidney paired donation · Kidney transplant · Laparoscopic donor nephrectomy · Liver-kidney transplant (simultaneous) · Living donor evaluation · Lymphocele · Opportunistic infection · OPTN / UNOS · Organ procurement organization (OPO) · Panel reactive antibody (PRA) · Post-transplant diabetes · Preemptive transplant · Recipient · Rejection · Re-transplant · Transplant center · Transplant evaluation · Transplant waiting list · Waiting list · Warm ischemia · Xenotransplantation

Dialysis (57 terms)

Access, vascular · Arteriovenous fistula (AVF) · Arteriovenous graft (AVG) · Bioimpedance · Buttonhole cannulation · Catheter, dialysis (tunneled) · Catheter, peritoneal dialysis · Conservative kidney management · Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) · Continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD) · Continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) · Convection · Cuff (catheter) · Dialysate · Dialysis · Dialysis access · Dialysis adequacy · Dialysis unit (center) · Dialyzer · Diffusion · Dry weight · Dwell time · Exit site · Fistula · Hemodiafiltration (HDF) · Hemodialysis catheter · Hemodialysis (HD) · Home dialysis · Home hemodialysis · Icodextrin · Incremental dialysis · Interdialytic weight gain (IDWG) · Jugular vein · Kt/V · Membrane (dialysis) · Missed treatments (dialysis) · Nocturnal hemodialysis · Osmosis · PD fluid (dialysate) · Peritoneal dialysis (PD) · Peritoneal equilibration test (PET) · Peritoneal membrane · Peritonitis (PD) · Renal replacement therapy · Residual kidney function · Reverse osmosis · Steal syndrome · Thrill · Transient dialysis · Transmembrane pressure · Ultrafiltration · Urea reduction ratio (URR) · Urgent-start peritoneal dialysis · Vascular access · Vein preservation · Venous stenosis · Water treatment (dialysis)

Genetic (13 terms)

Alport syndrome · APOL1 gene variants · Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD) · Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease (ARPKD) · Bartter and Gitelman syndromes · Congenital anomalies of the kidney and urinary tract (CAKUT) · Cystinosis · Cystinuria · Fabry disease · Horseshoe kidney · Medullary sponge kidney · Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) · Von Hippel-Lindau disease

Pathology (2 terms)

Glomerulosclerosis · Interstitial fibrosis and tubular atrophy (IFTA)

People (17 terms)

Advance directive · Dietitian, renal · ESRD Network · Hospice · KDIGO · Medical power of attorney · Medicare ESRD benefit · Nephrologist · Nephrology · Nephrology nurse · Palliative care · Patient care technician (dialysis) · Shared decision-making · Social worker · Support group · Transplant coordinator · Urologist

Resources for learning more

Organization	What it offers	Website*
National Kidney Foundation	Kidney disease education, diet guidance, and support	kidney.org
NIDDK, National Institutes of Health	Plain-language kidney disease information	niddk.nih.gov
American Kidney Fund	Financial help and education for people with kidney disease	kidneyfund.org
American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)	Patient education and advocacy	aakp.org
PKD Foundation	Polycystic kidney disease education and research	pkdcure.org
MedlinePlus	Health topics and medical words explained	medlineplus.gov
OPTN and Transplant Living	Transplant waiting list and patient information	optn.transplant.hrsa.gov; transplantliving.org

*Confirm websites before relying on them. TLHF also offers companion guides on kidney anatomy, kidney transplant, and dialysis.

From TLHF

Words can be frightening, but understanding them gives you power. Ask your care team to explain any term, as often as you need. **Health. Awareness. Hope.**

Notes