

Glossary of terms kidney cancer

Ablation therapy	A type of minimally-invasive procedure to remove abnormal tissue. The doctor destroys the abnormal tissue using heat (radiofrequency ablation) or extreme cold (cryoablation).
Active surveillance	A form of treatment in which the doctor actively monitors the tumour or tumours and their growth, based on a strict visiting schedule. For each visit, CT, ultrasound or x-rays are taken, and other appropriate exams may be performed.
Adrenal gland	The adrenal glands are organs that sit at the top of the kidneys. They are responsible for releasing hormones.
Adrenalectomy	The surgical procedure in which the adrenal gland is removed.
Anaemia	A lowered level of red blood cells. It is the most common disorder of the blood. It causes fatigue, weakness and poor concentration, among others.
Anaesthesia	Before a procedure you will get medication to make sure that you don't feel pain. Under general anaesthesia you are unconscious and unaware of what is happening to you. Under spinal or local anaesthesia you will not feel pain in the part of your body where the procedure is done. Anaesthesia wears off gradually after the procedure.
Antiangiogenic therapy	Therapy with drugs which prevent the formation of new blood vessels that feed a tumour and allow it to grow.
Asymptomatic	Any condition which does not cause symptoms and is discovered incidentally.
Benign tumour	A non-cancerous growth which will not spread to other organs.
Biopsy	A medical procedure in which a small piece of tissue is removed from the body to examine it. This is done to get information for diagnosing, monitoring, and treatment.
Chemotherapy	Is a treatment of cancer with drugs that are toxic to cells. Some are specifically toxic to cells that grow faster than normal, like cancer cells.
Clear cell renal cell carcinoma	A type of kidney tumour with a high content of fat.

Clinical trial	These are experimental research studies designed to answer specific questions about treatments or drugs. They generally test how well a treatment works among patients with specific characteristics.
Contrast agent	A substance that increases the contrast of structures or fluids in the body. It is used in medical imaging (See <i>also</i> imaging).
Cryotherapy	Is the use of low temperatures in medical therapy, to treat either benign or malignant cell growth.
Computed tomography (CT)	Imaging technique that makes a series of x-ray images of the body.
Cytoreductive nephrectomy	Cytoreductive means reducing the number of tumour cells. This surgery is specific for metastatic kidney cancer. In this surgical procedure a tumour in the kidney is removed, while leaving distant metastases. The aim of the surgery is to reduce the total tumour cells in the body.
Diagnosis	The doctor and nurses do a series of tests to understand what causes your symptoms.
Embolization	A non-surgical, minimally-invasive procedure in which a blood vessel is blocked to prevent the blood flow from reaching a tumour.
Enzyme	Large biological molecules that are responsible for the processes of the metabolism.
Fatigue	This means you feel more tired than usual, you are out of energy, and it doesn't get better after you sleep. You may also experience pain in your joints, muscles, and chest.
Fatty tissue	A type of connective tissue made of cells which store fat. Also called adipose tissue.
Fuhrman nuclear grade	Analysing the aggressiveness of a tumour based on the structure of its cells.
Hand-foot syndrome	A side effect of some types of drug therapy for cancer. It causes redness, swelling and pain on the palms of the hands and/or the soles of the feet, and in some cases blisters.
Histopathological analysis	The examination of tissue under a microscope, to study the presence and characteristics of diseases such as cancer.
Imaging	Taking images of the body with ultrasound, x-ray or other scanning techniques.

Immunotherapy	A type of cancer treatment which boosts the immune system to fight tumour cells.
JJ-stent	A tube that is temporarily placed in the ureter to make sure urine can flow from the kidney to the bladder.
Kidneys	Two bean-shaped organs in the back of the abdomen that filter the blood and produce urine.
Laparoscopic surgery	A minimally-invasive surgical technique in which the surgeon does not need to cut through skin and tissue. Instead, the surgeon inserts the surgical instruments through small incisions in your abdomen.
Localized kidney cancer	A kidney cancer where the tumour is limited to the kidney and has not spread.
Locally-advanced kidney cancer	A cancer where the tumour has grown out of the kidneys into surrounding tissue and invaded veins, the adrenal gland, or lymph nodes.
Lymph nodes	Small oval-shaped organs that play a role in regulating how the immune system responds.
Lymphadenectomy	The surgical procedure in which the lymph nodes are removed because they are enlarged due to the presence of a tumour.
Malignant tumour	A cancerous growth which either grows continuously or in spurts. Malignant tumours can metastasize, which means they spread throughout the body.
Metastasectomy	The surgical procedure to remove metastases. These are tumours that have spread to other organs of the body.
Metastatic disease	When a tumour has spread to other organs or lymph nodes.
Minimally-invasive surgery	A surgical procedure where there is no need to cut through skin and tissue. Small incisions are made in the abdomen to insert the surgical instruments.
MRI scan	Magnetic Resonance Imaging is a technique in which strong magnetic fields and radio waves are used to make images of the body.
Multidisciplinary	A combination of different branches of expertise. In medicine, it means that for instance urologists, oncologists, psychologists or other medical specialists work together.
Neoangiogenesis	The process through which new blood vessels form from pre-existing vessels. In cancer this process allows tumours to grow.

Nephron-sparing surgery	Another name for partial nephrectomy, the surgical removal of a kidney tumour together with some of the normal kidney tissue. This surgery aims at preserving as much of the kidney tissue as possible.
Oncologist	A medical professional who is dedicated to the diagnosis, therapy, follow-up and general care of a person with any type of cancer.
Open surgery	A surgical procedure in which the surgeon cuts skin and tissues to have direct access to the structures or organs.
Palliative care	A concept of care with the goal to optimize your quality of life if you cannot recover from your illness. It involves physical, psychological, social, and spiritual issues.
Paraesthesia	A prickling (“pins and needles”) or tingling (“falling asleep”) sensation of the skin.
Paraneoplastic syndromes	Reactions that the body can have to any type of cancer and may include high blood pressure, weight loss, fever, anaemia, muscle mass loss, and loss of appetite.
Partial nephrectomy	A surgical procedure in which a part of the kidney is removed.
Pathologist	A medical professional who studies tissue, blood, or urine to understand the specific characteristics of diseases. In cancer treatment, the pathologist helps with the diagnosis and classification of tumours.
Perinephric haematoma	A collection of blood next to or around the kidney.
Perirenal fat	The fat that surrounds the kidney.
Petechia	Lots of tiny red spots or bruises on your arms and legs, caused by a minor haemorrhage in the blood vessels of the skin.
Primary tumour	The malignant cell growth located where the tumour first began to develop.
Prognosis	The medical term for predicting the likely outcome of health after treatment.
Radical nephrectomy	A surgical procedure in which the entire kidney is removed.
Radiofrequency ablation	A medical procedure which uses the heat generated from high-frequency currents to treat kidney tumours.
Radiologist	A medical professional who specialises in imaging techniques. In cancer, the radiologist analyses x-ray, ultrasound, CT, MRI, or other scans to diagnose or monitor the tumour.

Radiation therapy	A type of cancer treatment that uses radiation to control or kill malignant cells.
Recurrence	The return of cancer after treatment and after a period of time in which the cancer could not be detected. This can happen either in the place where the cancer first was detected, or somewhere else in the body. There is no standard period of time, but most doctors would consider it a recurrence if the cancer had not been detected again for at least one year.
Renal	Related to the kidneys.
Renal artery	The artery that carries a large portion of the blood flow that needs to be filtered to the kidneys.
Renal artery clamp	An instrument used during surgery. The blood flow through the renal artery is blocked with a device called a clamp that compresses the artery.
Renal cell carcinoma	Medical name of kidney cancer.
Renal cyst	Fluid-filled sacs located on the kidney. Cysts can be malignant.
Renal fascia	Also called Gerota's fascia, it is a layer of connective tissue that surrounds the kidneys.
Renal vein	This is the vein that carries the blood filtered by the kidney back into the body.
Surgical robot system	An instrument to help doctors perform laparoscopic surgery. The surgeon controls the robotic instrument with remote control sensors.
Targeted therapy	These are drugs that target the mechanisms that cancer cells use to grow.
Thyroid	A gland found in the neck which controls how quickly the body uses energy, makes proteins and how sensitive it is to other hormones.
TNM classification	The Tumour Node Metastasis (TNM) classification is an international classification used to classify tumours according to the size and invasiveness of the tumour (T), whether any lymph nodes are affected (N) and if the cancer has spread to any other parts of your body (M).
Treatment pathway	One of the main management tools for doctors. The different tasks or interventions are defined, optimized and set in a specific order. With this the medical team can work on the health of a patient together.
Tumour spillage	When tumour cells reach the blood or another organ during surgery. These cells may grow in a different location and develop into tumours.

Tumour stage	This refers to how extended a cancer is in the body. It is usually based on the size of the tumour and whether the tumour has spread to the lymph nodes or other organs.
Ultrasound	Imaging technique that uses high-frequency sounds to make an image of the inside of the body.
Ureter	One of the two tubes through which urine flows from the kidneys to the bladder.
Urologist	A medical professional specialized in health and diseases of the urinary tract and the genitals.
Vena Cava	The large vein that returns blood with low oxygen from the body into the heart.

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This leaflet is part of EAU Patient Information on Kidney Cancer. It contains general information about this disease. If you have any specific questions about your individual medical situation you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider. No leaflet can replace a personal conversation with your doctor.

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The content of this leaflet is in line with the EAU Guidelines.

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