



Renal Cell Carcinoma Fact Sheet

The Disease

- Renal cell carcinoma (RCC) is the most common type of kidney cancer in adults, causing 85 percent of all kidney cancers.¹ Despite advances in understanding the growth mechanisms of many different tumor types, kidney cancer is still not fully understood. It is believed that both the Ras signaling pathway and angiogenesis may play a role in kidney cancer.
- RCC disproportionately affects men, with twice as many men developing RCC than women.¹
- RCC is usually diagnosed between the ages of 50 and 70 years.¹ At the time of diagnosis, the cancer has already metastasized (spread to distant body locations) in about one-third of people with RCC.¹
- For patients with early-stage RCC, the five-year survival rate is between 70 and 98 percent. In later-stage disease, when the cancer has metastasized, the five-year survival rate is between 15 and 18 percent.²
- Approximately 190,000 people worldwide (about 31,000 Americans) are diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma each year, and more than 91,000 of them (about 12,000 Americans) die from the disease annually.^{3,4}
 - The United States, Canada, Northern Europe, Australia, and New Zealand have the highest rates.³
 - The lowest rates are reported in Thailand, China, and the Philippines.³

Risk Factors & Symptoms

- Kidney dialysis patients and those with a family history of RCC are at an increased risk of developing RCC.¹
- Smoking is a major RCC risk factor. People who smoke are two times more likely to develop RCC than nonsmokers.¹

- Other RCC risk factors include obesity and long-term use of analgesics (pain relievers).¹
- Symptoms of RCC include:¹
 - Blood in the urine
 - Back pain
 - Pain in the side that does not go away
 - Abdominal pain or enlargement
 - Unexpected weight loss
 - Loss of appetite
 - Severe fatigue

Treatment

- The treatment of RCC depends on the severity of the cancer and the patient's overall health.
 - The primary therapy for kidney cancer is surgery, which is effective only when all of the cancer is removed. Radiation treatment is also used when the cancer has spread beyond the kidney.¹
 - Immune modulators, such as interferon-alpha and interleukin-2 (IL-2), are sometimes used, but response rates remain relatively low with these treatments, which can be highly toxic.³
 - Although kidney cancer is generally resistant to chemotherapy it may be used in some cases.³

References:

¹ American Foundation for Urologic Disease. Available at www.afud.org/conditions/kc.html. Assessed September 11, 2003.

² American Foundation for Urologic Diseases. Available at www.afud.org/conditions/kidneycancer.asp

³ www.WHO.com (Globocan 2000)

⁴ www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000516.htm

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