

Understanding Pyelonephritis

Pyelonephritis occurs in about 3 to 7 of every 10,000 people in the U.S.

1 Introduction

Pyelonephritis, more commonly known as kidney infection, is a type of urinary tract infection (UTI) where one or both of the kidneys become infected. Pyelonephritis can be caused by either bacteria or a virus and, if left untreated, may cause permanent damage to the kidneys or spread the infection to the bloodstream. Due to the potential for severe — and in some cases life threatening — outcomes, it is important for individuals who are experiencing symptoms of pyelonephritis to make an appointment with their health care provider immediately.

2 Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of pyelonephritis include:

- Fever and chills
- A burning feeling or pain when urinating
- Pain in the abdomen, back, side or groin
- Foul smelling urine
- Nausea and vomiting
- Urgent or frequent urination
- Cloudy urine

3 Risk Factors

Although pyelonephritis can occur in any individual regardless of sex or age, there are some risk factors and preexisting conditions that may increase the likelihood of infection:

- Vesicoureteral reflux
- Being female (the urethra is shorter in women, making it easier for bacteria to travel into the body)
- Urinary tract blockage
- Weakened immune system
- Using a urinary catheter
- Enlarged prostate gland

5 Treatments

Treatment for pyelonephritis generally begins by placing the patient on antibiotics. After starting the antibiotic regimen, most individuals will feel better within a few days. However, if the symptoms do not subside or worsen, hospitalization may be required to deliver antibiotics via an IV. In some cases, the patient may also need surgery to remove any obstructions or correct structural problems in the kidney. If the infection is severe, the treatments mentioned may yield no response and a nephrectomy may be necessary to remove the damaged section of the kidney.

Did you know?

About 1 in every 30 cases of UTI leads to kidney infection.

For more information on pyelonephritis and supportive resources, please visit www.kidneyfund.org.

References:

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/15456-kidney-infection-pyelonephritis>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/pyelonephritis#pregnancy>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/kidney-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20353387>