Your Guide to Understanding IgAN Terms

Are all the medical words getting confusing?
To help demystify the jargon, we created a glossary of frequently used terms.

Living with IgAN? Go to KidneyHope.com

Doctor & patient portrayal.

NOVARTIS

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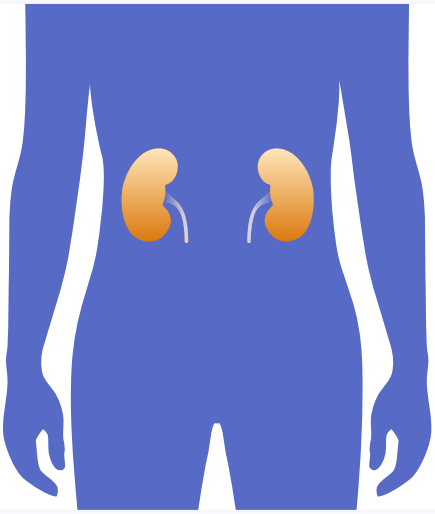
NOVARTIS

What is IgAN?

Immunoglobulin A nephropathy (IgAN), also known as Berger's disease, is a persistent, long-lasting autoimmune disease that happens when the body's natural defense system can't tell the difference between your own cells and foreign cells. This causes the body to mistakenly attack normal cells. Although IgAN is often referred to as a kidney disease, it is thought to start in the gut.

Your kidneys

You have 2 kidneys. Each one is about the size of your fist and located just below the rib cage. Unlike your gall bladder, or your appendix, your kidneys are vital organs you need to survive.



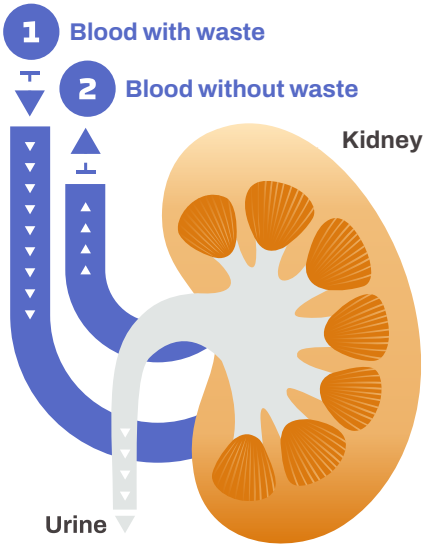
What your kidneys do

- Filter waste and toxins from your blood
- Regulate blood pressure
- Help to make red blood cells
- Support bone health

How your kidneys work

- Each of your kidneys is made up of about a million fine filters called nephrons
- The nephrons work through a 2-step process:

1. Each nephron includes the glomerulus, a specially modified blood vessel that filters unneeded substances from your blood in the form of urine.
2. The nephrons also include very tiny blood vessels called capillaries that return needed substances to your blood and remove waste.



Kidney function and the immune system

The immune system protects your body from harmful substances, germs, and unwanted changes to your cells that could make you ill.

Your kidneys and your immune system work as a team and depend on each other to stay healthy.

By filtering toxins, the kidneys help balance vital functions of the immune system. At the same time, your immune system protects your kidneys from foreign elements that could disrupt their function.

Autoimmune disease

When your body's natural defense system mistakenly attacks healthy cells.

Immunodeficiency

When your immune system can't adequately protect your body from infection.

Renal

Anything pertaining to the kidneys.

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The complement system

Also known as the complement cascade, this is a part of the immune system that helps antibodies remove unneeded substances from damaged cells. If the complement system becomes overactivated, the kidneys can be harmed.

Antibodies

Proteins produced by your immune system that protect your body from unwanted substances. Without antibodies, infections could impact kidney function.

Autoantibodies

Antibodies that mistakenly target and react with your own body. This could trigger autoimmune damage to different parts of the body, including the kidneys. IgAN is one example of an autoimmune disease.

Dysregulation in IgAN

IgAN is an example of an autoimmune disease in which the dysregulated immune system attacks normal kidney tissue.

IgA

In IgAN, a genetic factor causes the increased production of an abnormal form of a critical antibody called IgA. This abnormal IgA may trigger autoantibodies which bind the abnormal IgA to form immune complexes. These immune complexes deposit in the glomeruli of the kidney and cause damage.

Still exploring the terms?

Find ways to discuss your condition with those you care about.
Find the support you need at **KidneyHope.com**

IgA, immunoglobulin A.

Kidney disease progression

A deeper understanding of these terms can help you understand your condition.

The 5 stages of kidney disease

There are 5 stages of kidney disease. The rate of kidney function decline can vary from one person to another, with multiple factors playing a role in disease progression.

Stage	1	2	3	4	5
Kidney function	**Slight kidney damage** with normal kidney function	**Mild loss** of kidney function	**Mild, moderate, or possibly severe** loss of kidney function	**Moderate to severe** kidney damage, loss of function	**Advanced** kidney disease, or end-stage disease
% of normal kidney function based on GFR	**90% or higher**	**60%-89%**	**30%-59%**	**15%-29%**	**Less than 15%**
Symptoms	**Usually none**	**Usually none**	Possible changes in urine and swelling	All symptoms of stage 3, plus possible shortness of breath	Includes symptoms from earlier stages, plus difficulty breathing or sleeping, feeling very weak, chest pain, difficulty concentrating, nausea, or vomiting
Management and treatment	**Management of** blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar level is considered, to help keep kidney disease from worsening	**Management of** blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar level is considered, to help keep kidney disease from worsening	**The use of medication is considered** to manage any other conditions, such as blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels	**Regular visits** with your nephrologist to take steps to slow kidney damage and plan for possible treatments for advanced chronic kidney disease, to include bone disease or anemia	**Dialysis and transplantation** may be considered

GFR, glomerular filtration rate.

Asymptomatic

When you show no symptoms of disease. Without showing symptoms, it can be difficult to get a diagnosis. For example, if you've been diagnosed with IgAN, your kidneys are being affected even though you may not feel the symptoms.

CKD

Chronic kidney disease is the gradual, ongoing loss of kidney function.

ESKD/ESRD

End-stage kidney disease, also called end-stage renal disease. This is the last stage of chronic kidney disease, when your kidneys can no longer support your body's needs, and dialysis treatment is required.

Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis is the most common type of dialysis. A machine outside the body is used to remove waste products and excess fluid from the blood when the kidneys stop working properly. Treatment usually takes about 3 to 5 hours each time and is done 3 times a week. You may experience a drop in blood pressure. If this happens, you may feel sick to your stomach, or have a headache or cramps.

Kidney transplant

A person with ESRD has a kidney from a living or deceased donor surgically implanted.

Discover more about symptoms, management, and supportive care

Find the support you need at **KidneyHope.com**

Testing kidney function

Learn about tests, their relevance, and target numbers.

Lab Test	Relevance	Procedure	Test Numbers
UPCR (urine protein-to-creatinine ratio): A measurement of the levels of proteins and creatinine (a byproduct of muscle metabolism) in your urine	**Long-term** higher-than-normal levels of proteins in your urine can be a sign of progressive kidney damage that can lead to kidney failure	Tested using a **urine sample**	**Higher levels of protein** in your urine can lead to a diagnosis of kidney disease or related conditions
Hematuria: Checking for the presence of blood in the urine	**Blood in your urine** may occur due to inflammation in the kidney	Tested using a **urine sample**	If your test result **shows blood in your urine**, you may need more tests to find out why
Blood pressure (BP): The pressure of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries	High blood pressure can damage the kidneys and reduce function	**BP is measured using a cuff**	Guidelines recommend **targeting a systolic blood pressure of 120 mm Hg**
GFR/eGFR (glomerular filtration rate/estimated GFR): A measurement of how well the kidneys filter or "clean" the blood	eGFR is tracked over time to determine the "stage" of kidney disease on a **scale of 1 to 5**	Tested using a **blood sample**	In general, **eGFR numbers go down** as chronic kidney disease gets worse
Biopsy: Taking one or more tiny pieces of the kidney to look at with a special microscope	For some kidney problems, a correct diagnosis can only be made with **a kidney biopsy**	1. **A biopsy sample** is taken using a needle guided by ultrasound 2. **A biopsy sample** is taken directly from the kidney during a procedure performed by a nephrologist or interventional radiologist	**Results can show:** • How serious your condition is • How quickly your condition is progressing

Feel more informed about your condition

Knowing these frequently used terms may help you better navigate your treatment journey.

Medications

- **Corticosteroids:** Medications used to treat a variety of inflammatory diseases.
- **ACEi/ARB:** Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers are medications used to help reduce blood pressure and proteinuria, slow progression of kidney disease, and improve outcomes in patients who have heart failure, type 2 diabetes, or a history of heart attacks.
- **Immunosuppressants:** A variety of medications prescribed to help protect your new kidney after transplant. These medications suppress your body's natural immune response and trick your body into believing your new organ is not foreign. You'll need to take these medications for the rest of your life.

Nutrition guidelines

- **Fish oil, omega-3 fatty acids:** Supplements used to help prevent kidney inflammation and slow the progression of kidney disease. Be sure to consult your doctor before taking fish oil, omega-3 fatty acid, or any other supplements.
- **Kidney-friendly diet:** Your doctor may prescribe a food plan to help you manage your kidney disease and slow damage to your kidneys. This diet will help to keep certain minerals from building up, which is important because your kidneys do not work as well to remove waste products from your body.

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Health insurance terms

- **Coinsurance:** A type of insurance in which you pay a share of the payment.
- **Co-pay:** A fixed amount ($20, for example) you pay for a covered health care treatment or service after you've met your deductible.
- **Deductible (Ded):** The total amount you pay for covered health care treatment or services before your insurance plan starts to pay.
- **In-network (INN):** When a doctor, hospital, or other provider accepts your health insurance plan, they are in network.
- **Prior authorization (PA):** A requirement by health plans for patients to obtain approval of a health care service or medication before the care is provided.
- **Maximum out-of-pocket (MOOP):** The most you must pay for covered services in a plan year.
- **Explanation of benefits (EOB):** The insurance company's written explanation regarding a claim, showing what they paid and what the patient must pay.

Now that you've learned more about your condition, discover resources to help you in your everyday life

KidneyHope.com

Health care team

- **Pathologist:** A medical doctor who reviews tissue from the body under special microscopes to diagnose diseases.
- **Nephrologist:** A medical doctor who diagnoses and treats kidney diseases.

Symptoms

- **Edema:** Swelling caused by excess fluid trapped in your body's tissues. Swelling in the body often increases when a person has heart or kidney disease that is getting worse.
- **Fatigue:** A feeling of being tired and weak, often caused by a severe decrease in kidney function.
- **Renal hypertension:** High blood pressure caused by the narrowing of your arteries that carry blood to your kidneys. When your kidneys are not getting enough blood, they react by making a hormone that makes your blood pressure rise.

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