

## Cysts in the kidney and polycystic kidney disease

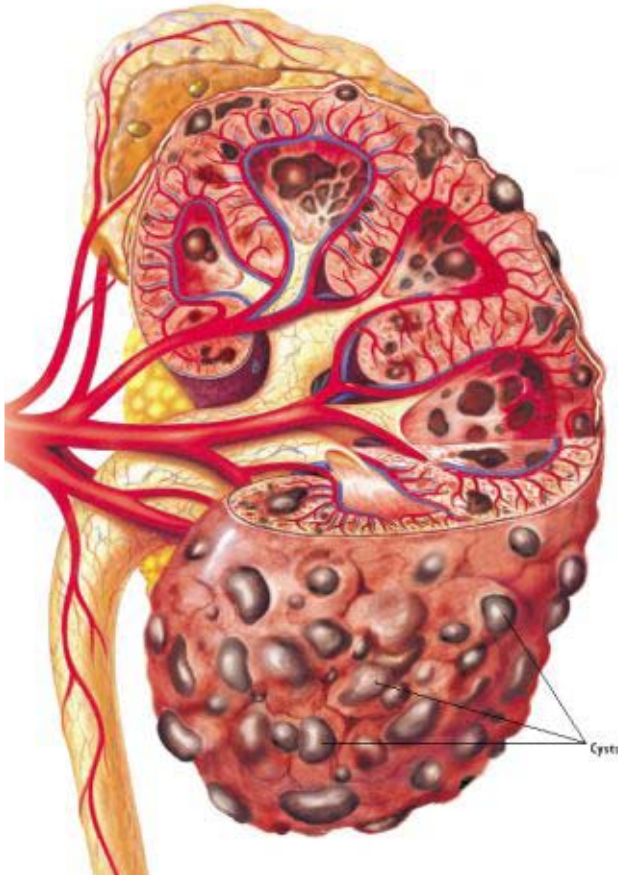
### Cysts in the kidneys

Cysts are fluid-filled structures within or on the edge of the kidney. They are nearly always a coincidental finding on ultrasound, but occasionally they may cause pain and tenderness. Rarely, they may bleed, become infected or if very large, may cause pressure on the surrounding organs such as the large intestine.

If a cyst is detected an expert ultrasound review should be made to determine the shape, contents and wall structure of the cyst which might indicate it is not a simple cyst but something more serious such as an inherited cystic disorder of the kidneys or, rarely, a cystic tumour of the kidney.

In patients over 50 years of age, 50% have one or more simple cysts, which usually do not cause symptoms or long-term problems.

### Polycystic kidney disease



*Polycystic kidney disease*  
In this inherited disease, cysts damage the kidneys resulting in blood in the urine and frequent kidney infections. Kidney failure and high blood pressure may also occur

Normal Kidney



### Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD)

ADPKD is an inherited cystic disorder of the kidney in which multiple cysts form in the kidneys and progressively increase in size, compressing adjacent kidney tissue.

When severe, this may ultimately lead to end stage kidney failure.

### Who is at risk of developing ADPKD?

In this condition, half of the children born to people with ADPKD will carry the gene, some of whom will eventually develop kidney failure.

Recent discoveries now allow us to identify in advance who carries the gene, however no way has yet been devised to predict who will develop end-stage kidney failure.

For those offspring who do develop kidney failure, it occurs at an average age of 50–60 years, but it may happen much earlier or much later.

In about 10% of affected families the disease occurs later and most of this group do not develop kidney failure. For the few that do, dialysis is required at about 70 years of age.

Another small group of people develop ADPKD without anyone in their family ever having suffered from the condition.