

Retroperitoneal fibrosis is a rare inflammatory disorder in which abnormal formation of fiber-like tissue (fibrosis) occurs behind the membrane that lines the cavity of the abdomen (peritoneum). This abnormal tissue growth often spreads to affect the tubes that carry urine from the kidney to the bladder (ureters). Often these tubes become blocked by the excess tissue. Specific symptoms may vary depending upon the exact location of tissue growth and how far it spreads. In most cases the cause of this disorder is unknown (idiopathic). The exact cause of retroperitoneal fibrosis is not known in about two-thirds of the affected individuals (idiopathic). A drug used in the treatment and prevention of migraine headaches (methysergide) may be the cause of this rare disorder in 12 percent of cases. Malignant tumors are associated with retroperitoneal fibrosis in eight percent of affected individuals. Tissue that has been injured by trauma or surgery may be a factor in some cases. Retroperitoneal fibrosis affects males twice as often as females. The majority of cases occur in individuals between 40 and 60 years of age. However, the disorder can occur at any age, although it is extremely rare in children.