

# Kidney Cancer: Tests After Diagnosis



## What tests might I have after being diagnosed?

After a diagnosis of kidney cancer, you'll likely need other tests. These imaging tests help your healthcare providers learn more about your overall health and the cancer. They can help show if the cancer has grown into nearby areas or spread to other parts of your body. The test results help your healthcare providers decide the best ways to treat the cancer. If you have any questions about these or other tests, be sure to talk with your healthcare team.

The tests you have may include:

- Chest X-ray
- Belly (abdominal) ultrasound
- Bone scan
- Renal angiogram
- CT scan
- MRI

## Imaging tests

### Chest X-ray

A chest X-ray is done to look for changes in your lungs. These might be a sign that the kidney cancer has spread to your lungs or chest. An X-ray uses a small amount of radiation to make an image of organs and bones inside your body. It can show enlarged lymph nodes in your chest.

### Abdominal ultrasound

Ultrasound uses sound waves to create images of your insides. For this test, a gel is put on your belly and a small wand called a transducer is pressed on your skin to look at your abdominal organs (those inside your belly). The transducer gives off sound waves and picks up the echoes as they bounce off the tissues. A computer makes these echoes into images. This test can be used to help figure out if the cancer has spread from your kidneys to other organs, such as the liver.

### Bone scan

This test may be done if your healthcare provider thinks the cancer might have spread to your bones. A small amount of a radioactive substance is put into a vein in your hand or arm. It travels through your blood and collects in bones where there is damage. Then the scan is done to show these areas. The damage may be from cancer or other things, like arthritis. More testing may be needed to find the exact cause of the bone changes.

### Renal angiogram

This is a type of X-ray that uses a contrast substance to get pictures of the blood vessels that are taking blood to the kidney tumor. The contrast is put into the artery that leads into your kidney. X-rays are then taken to map the flow of the contrast. This test helps healthcare providers plan surgery to take out the tumor. Angiography of the kidney blood vessels is often done as part of a CT or MRI scan.

## CT scan

A CT scan uses a series of X-rays and a computer to make detailed 3-D pictures of the inside of your body. You may need to drink a contrast substance (contrast dye) or it may be put into your blood through a vein. The contrast helps show more details. You may have a CT scan of your chest, abdomen, or pelvis.

## MRI

An MRI uses large and strong magnets, radio waves, and a computer to make detailed pictures of the inside of your body. A contrast substance called gadolinium may be put into a vein to help show details clearly. MRI might be done if you can't have a CT scan. It's also very good at showing whether the cancer has grown into major blood vessels, the brain, or spinal cord.

## Working with your healthcare provider

Your healthcare provider will talk with you about which tests you'll have. Make sure to prepare for the tests as instructed. Tell your healthcare provider if you had allergic reactions to contrast before. Ask questions and talk about any concerns you have.

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