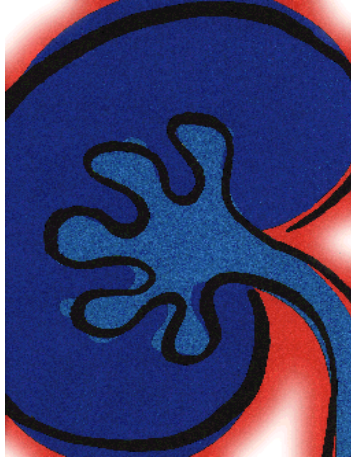


UNC Center for Maternal & Infant Health

"If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must employ methods never before attempted."

Francis Bacon

Pyelonephritis (pie-eh-lo-ne-fri-tis) (Kidney infection)



What is Pyelonephritis?

Pyelonephritis is a kidney infection. Pregnant women are more likely to get a kidney infection because of changes that occur in pregnancy. During pregnancy, urine moves more slowly from the kidneys to the bladder because of new levels of hormones in the body. The uterus also gets bigger and puts pressure on the *ureters* (tubes that connect the kidneys to the bladder). These changes make it easier for germs to grow in the kidneys and cause an infection. Women who have kidney stones, diabetes, or sickle cell disease or sickle cell trait have a greater chance of getting a kidney infection during pregnancy.

How often does this happen?

One out of 100-200 pregnant women will get a kidney infection.

How are kidney infections diagnosed?

A kidney infection is diagnosed when you begin to feel badly and if germs are found in your urine. Kidney infections cause you to have a fever, chills, urinate often, feel pain or burning when you urinate, and feel back pain at the bottom of your ribs. Nausea and vomiting may occur. A bladder infection (*cystitis*) is milder. It usually does not cause fever, chills and back pain. The symptoms of a bladder infection are a strong urge to empty your bladder (*urgency*), pain or burning when you empty your bladder (*dysuria*) and the need to empty your bladder often. A bladder infection can be treated with antibiotics taken by mouth at home.

How are kidney infections treated?

A kidney infection during pregnancy is treated in the hospital. You will have an intravenous line (IV) to give you fluid and antibiotics. After you have received antibiotics through the IV for a few days, you will start taking the medicines by mouth. A urine test will be done to look for germs in your urine. Blood tests will be done to see how your kidneys are working.

What will be done if my kidney infection does not get better quickly?

The fever should go away in two or three days with antibiotics. If it does not, your ureters may be blocked by a kidney stone. An ultrasound or an *intravenous pyelogram (IVP)* will be done to look to

UNC Center for Maternal & Infant Health

"If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must employ methods never before attempted."

Francis Bacon

see if you have a kidney stone. An IVP is a special x-ray. A special dye is put into your vein so that your kidneys can be seen well on the x-ray. If a kidney stone is found, the urologists, (kidney doctors) will put a plastic tube (stent) in the ureter to help the urine drain better. You will be given medicine that will help you feel very relaxed and comfortable when this is done. A small telescope is placed in the bladder and the stent is put in place. You should not have a lot of discomfort with the stent and your kidney infection should go away. Sometimes the stent becomes blocked by salt crystals from your urine. If this happens, it will be replaced. The stent is usually kept until six weeks after you deliver. At that time, the urologist will talk with you about treatments to remove your kidney stone.

How will a kidney infection affect my pregnancy?

If you have a kidney infection you are more likely to go into labor before your due date. Uterine contractions may feel like tightening of the uterus or the baby "balling up". Stomach cramps with or without diarrhea or menstrual-like cramps that are constant or come and go could also be a sign of preterm labor. An increase or change in vaginal discharge, pressure that feels like the baby is pushing down, or a low dull backache are other signs of preterm labor. It is not always easy to know if you are in preterm labor. You should tell your

doctor or nurse if you are having any of these symptoms right away.

There is also a chance that you could get another kidney infection during pregnancy. After you have finished taking the antibiotics by mouth to cure your kidney infection, you may be given an antibiotic to take every night during the rest of the pregnancy and for six weeks after you deliver. This will help to prevent another kidney infection.

Questions??

If you have any questions about pyelonephritis or your care at North Carolina Women's Hospital, please feel free to ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

Notes:

©2003, Center for Maternal & Infant Health



Campus Box 7181, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7181 • 919.843.7863 • Fax 919.843.7866
Visit our website www.mombaby.org