

IgA nephropathy (IgAN)

Inflammation of the kidneys' filters

Lowering protein in the urine and controlling blood pressure are the keys to protecting your kidneys.

What is it?

IgA is an antibody, a protein your immune system uses to fight infection. In IgA nephropathy, an abnormal form of IgA builds up in the kidneys' tiny filters. This causes inflammation that lets blood and protein leak into the urine and, over time, can scar the kidneys.

It's the most common type of glomerulonephritis (inflammation of the kidneys' filters) in the world.

Who gets it?

It's often found in teens and adults under 40, and is more common in men and in people of East Asian background. It sometimes runs in families. It is not contagious.

What you might notice

- pink, red or cola-coloured urine, often a day or two after a cold or sore throat
- blood or protein found on a routine urine test, or foamy urine
- high blood pressure or swelling

Many people have no symptoms.

How it's found

Urine and blood tests, and a **kidney biopsy**, the only way to confirm it.

How it's treated

IgA nephropathy varies a lot. Some people stay stable for years; others slowly lose kidney function. The amount of protein in your urine is one of the best guides to your risk.

- blood pressure medicines that also lower protein in the urine
- other kidney-protecting medicines
- for people at higher risk, medicines that target the immune system or the disease itself. Several newer treatments are now available; your team will discuss whether one is right for you.

What you can do

- Keep up with urine and blood tests, even when you feel well.
- Check your blood pressure at home and bring your readings to visits.
- Eat less salt, stay active and don't smoke.
- Avoid anti-inflammatory pain relievers (NSAIDs) unless your doctor says they're okay. Your pharmacist can tell you which products contain them.

Call your health care team if you have

- blood in your urine that you can see
- new swelling, or much less urine than usual

Learn more: Kidney Foundation of Canada, kidney.ca.

General information only. This sheet doesn't replace advice from your own health care team. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Dr. Shemer Ratner, Nephrology, Sudbury, Ontario. Last updated October 2026.