NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION®

Discussing IgA Nephropathy During the First Nephrology Visit: A Guide for Healthcare Professionals

EDUCATE YOUR PATIENTS

Reassure the patient on why a referral is needed

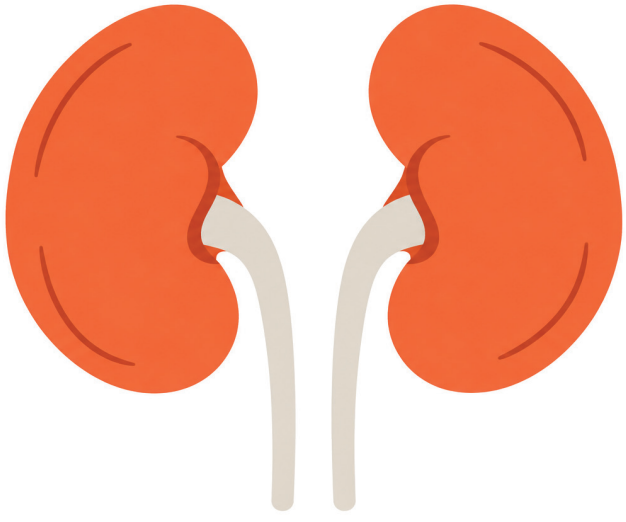
- Discuss why a nephrology referral was needed, and how a primary care clinician may have recommended that they see a kidney specialist to check their kidney health. This may be because of symptoms, signs, or lab results that suggest a kidney problem.
- Explain the role of the nephrologist, or kidney doctor. Reassure them that a nephrology visit not as a sign of immediate failure, but a way to help preserve their kidney health with people who have an expertise in this area.
- Acknowledge uncertainty and emotion, and that it is understandable to have questions. Acknowledge that hearing words like *IgA nephropathy, IgAN, kidney disease,* or *nephrologist* causes anxiety. Reassure them that IgAN is a chronic disease, but can be treated.

Discuss topics or terms that may need more clarity

- Mention that that IgA nephropathy (IgAN) is a kidney disease. It happens when a protein made by your immune system, called IgA, builds up in the kidneys. This can lead to damage to the tiny filters in the kidneys, called glomeruli. When these filters are damaged, the kidneys may have trouble removing waste and extra fluid from the blood.
- Discuss blood pressure and the critical role of blood pressure control in protecting kidney and heart health.
- Discuss the labs and tests that may be given and what may need to be monitored.
  - **A urinalysis is a test** that checks your urine for signs of health issues.
  - **An eGFR, or estimated glomerular filtration rate, is a blood test** that shows how well your kidneys are filtering, or removing, wastes from your blood.
  - **A urinary albumin-to-creatinine ratio (UACR) is a urine test** that checks for high protein (albumin) in the urine, which is a sign of kidney damage.
  - **A urine protein-to-creatinine ratio (UPCR)** may also be used. This test is similar to the UACR test, which measures albumin. Instead of measuring only the amount of albumin in your urine, it measures all the different proteins that may be present.

Discuss a kidney biopsy if they did not receive one

- When discussing kidney biopsy, mention what the procedure involves, why it's used, and its benefits and risks.
  - A kidney biopsy is a procedure where a tiny piece of your kidney is surgically removed with a special needle, and looked at under special microscopes.
  - A kidney biopsy is needed to confirm an IgAN diagnosis and help tailor timely treatment based on their individual health needs.
  - You may need to rest in bed for 12 to 24 hours after the biopsy, as directed by a clinician.
  - The risks from a kidney biopsy are very small. As in other medical and surgical procedures, certain complications may happen even though every effort is taken to prevent them.



Keep it conversational

- Ask the person what they have you been told so far, and what is their biggest concern today.
- Ask what they have heard about IgA nephropathy.
- Let them know it is normal to have questions, especially when there is so much information to sort through.
- Explain any terms that might need to be clarified.
- Make a clear recommendations based on the person's kidney condition and overall health.
- Talk with the patient or care partner about steps they can take to manage their health. Also discuss how to keep track of lab tests, including whether online records are available.

Discuss next steps

- State what will be monitored and when.
- Discuss supportive kidney care and treatment options through shared decision-making, based on the patient's clinical profile and current guidance.
- Review medicines, adherence, over-the-counter products, diet or sodium guidance, smoking, activity, pregnancy plans when relevant, and when to contact the care team.
- Provide a written follow-up plan and reliable educational resources.
- Mention that IgAN can behave differently in every person. The nephrologist will tailor a monitoring and treatment plan specific to any diagnosis or test results.



For more information, contact the National Kidney Foundation

Toll-free help line: 855.NKF.CARES or email: nkfcares@kidney.org

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