



What is polycystic kidney disease (PKD)?

PKD is a chronic, genetic disease that causes uncontrolled growth of fluid-filled cysts in the kidneys, often leading to kidney failure. There are two types of PKD: autosomal dominant (ADPKD) and autosomal recessive (ARPKD).

ADPKD

autosomal dominant

- ADPKD affects an estimated 12.4 million people worldwide, including 500,000 Americans.
- Parents have a 50% chance of passing the disease to their children, so it often affects many people in one family.
- ADPKD may develop as spontaneous mutation. About 20% of PKD patients have no family history of the disease.
- More than 50% of people with ADPKD will develop kidney failure in their 50s. ADPKD is the fourth leading cause of kidney failure.

ARPKD

autosomal recessive

- ARPKD is a rare form of the disease that occurs in 1 in 20,000 children.
- Autosomal recessive means each parent is a carrier of the disease but does not have the disease.
- ARPKD affects people differently, even in the same family.
- ARPKD impacts both the kidneys and liver.

PKD Kidney Basics

A typical kidney is the size of a human fist and weighs about a third of a pound. Polycystic kidneys can grow as large as a football and weigh 30 pounds. Cysts can be as small as a pinhead or as large as a grapefruit.

Common Symptoms

There's a range of other symptoms PKD patients may experience:

- Enlarged kidneys
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Kidney stones
- Urinary tract infections
- Hernia
- Blood in urine (hematuria)
- Depression
- Mitral valve prolapse
- Anxiety
- Protein in urine (proteinuria)
- Back or flank pain



We inspire hope by leading and convening research and community programs focused on discovering new treatments and, ultimately, a cure for PKD. Learn more at pkdcure.org/about-the-disease

Approved April 2026. © PKD Foundation