

Diseases And Conditions



Question: How is glomerular disease diagnosed?

Answer: Patients with glomerular disease have significant amounts of protein in the urine, which may be referred to as “nephrotic range” if levels are very high. Red blood cells in the urine are a frequent finding as well, particularly in some forms of glomerular disease. Urinalysis provides information about kidney damage by indicating levels of protein and red blood cells in the urine. Blood tests measure the levels of waste products such as creatinine and urea nitrogen to determine whether the filtering capacity of the kidneys is impaired. If these lab tests indicate kidney damage, the doctor may recommend ultrasound or an x ray to see whether the shape or size of the kidneys is abnormal. These tests are called renal imaging. But since glomerular disease causes problems at the cellular level, the doctor will probably also recommend a kidney biopsy—a procedure in which a needle is used to extract small pieces of tissue for examination with different types of microscopes, each of which shows a different aspect of the tissue. A biopsy may be helpful in confirming glomerular disease and identifying the cause.