

## What is prenatal hydronephrosis?

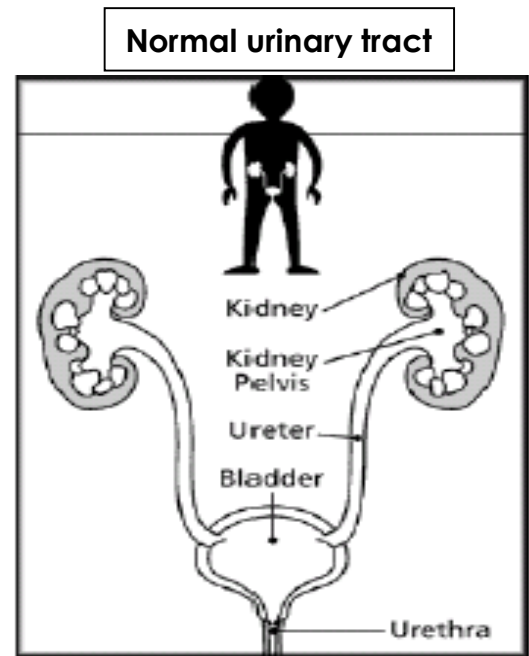
When the pelvis of the kidney stretches (dilates) it is called hydronephrosis. Prenatal means before birth. Prenatal hydronephrosis is the most common problem found on a prenatal ultrasound. It occurs in more than one out of one hundred babies. Often, it is gone by the time the baby is born.

To understand this problem, it helps to know how the normal urinary tract works.

## How does the normal urinary tract work?

- The **kidney** makes urine from waste products and extra fluid it filters from the blood.
- The urine is collected in the **kidney pelvis**, a part of the kidney.
- From there, the urine travels down the **ureter** into the **bladder**.
- The urine empties from the bladder through the **urethra**.

As the kidneys grow and develop, problems may occur. One of these problems is hydronephrosis, which may occur in one or both of the kidneys.



## What causes hydronephrosis?

- Blockage (obstruction). The block can occur at any point in the urinary tract. It may prevent east drainage of urine from the kidney. This may cause the kidney pelvis to stretch.
- Backward flow of urine from the bladder to the kidney. This is called vesicoureteral reflux.

## Will treatment be needed?

Most babies with hydronephrosis will not need any treatment before birth.

- Prenatal ultrasounds will be done on a regular basis. The amount of amniotic fluid will be checked. Amniotic fluid is mostly made of the baby's urine. If there is not enough fluid, it may mean that the kidneys aren't working well. If only one kidney is affected, the other kidney will be watched to be sure it is growing as it should.

After birth, treatment depends on the cause and how it is affecting your baby.

- Your baby will need a kidney ultrasound. This test will see if your baby has hydronephrosis and if it has gotten better or worse. Your baby's doctor will decide when this should be done but it often is done 1-4 weeks after birth.

### Care after birth (continued)

- A test called a **v**oiding **c**ystourethrogram (VCUG) may also be done. The test checks for backward flow of urine (reflux). It also shows if the urethra is blocked.
- A special scan may be done to check kidney function. The scan, called a nuclear medicine renal scan, also tells how well the kidney drains. Your baby's doctor or nurse will explain any tests that need to be done.
- Your baby will be closely watched to be sure that their kidneys are working well. Most often, this is done with regular doctor visits, kidney ultrasounds and blood pressure checks. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you if treatment is needed.

### Other Teaching Sheets that may be helpful:

- Having a Voiding Cystourethrogram (VCUG) #1442 (female).
- Having a Voiding Cystourethrogram (VCUG) #1443 (male).
- Repeat Urinary Tract Infections #1490.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- Symptoms of a urinary tract infection such as fever, vomiting, fussiness or bad smelling urine.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**