

# Renal Cell Carcinoma & Chemical Exposure

Mary Klements, Claims Advocate Updated: August 22, 2014



Since Vietnam veterans began returning from their military assignments overseas, we have found a wide spectrum of diseases and conditions that have been caused by chemical exposures. The most well-known and researched is Agent Orange. And it has also been found that contaminated water supply systems, such as at Camp Lejeune, has caused similar health problems as well. This post discusses kidney cancer and how to establish service-connection between chemical exposures and kidney cancer.

## What It Is

Renal cell carcinoma is the most common type of kidney cancer in adults. Many times, there are no warning signs or early symptoms of this disease, which makes [kidney cancer](#) difficult to diagnose early on. Once kidney cancer has been diagnosed, tests are done (called staging) to determine whether or not the cancer has spread to other parts of the body (called metastasis). Cancer spreads to other parts of the body by blood, tissue, or lymph nodes.

There are several signs and symptoms of kidney cancer:

- Weight loss
- Fever
- Hypertension
- Hypercalcemia
- Night sweats
- Malaise

Kidney cancer has four main stages:

Stage I— the [tumor](#) is 7 centimeters or smaller and is found only in the kidney.

Stage II—the [tumor](#) is larger than 7 centimeters and is found only in the kidney.

Stage III—

- the [tumor](#) is any size and [cancer](#) is found only in the [kidney](#) and in 1 or more nearby [lymph nodes](#); or
- cancer is found in the main [blood vessels](#) of the kidney or in the layer of fatty [tissue](#) around the kidney. Cancer may be found in 1 or more nearby lymph nodes.

Stage IV—[cancer](#) has spread:

- beyond the layer of fatty [tissue](#) around the [kidney](#) and may be found in the [adrenal gland](#) above the kidney with [cancer](#), or in nearby [lymph nodes](#); or
- to other [organs](#), such as the [lungs](#), [liver](#), bones, or brain, and may have spread to lymph nodes.

### Causes

Kidney cancer can be caused by a number of environmental and genetic factors. For the purposes of this blog post, we will focus on the environmental factors. Such factors include:

- smoking
- sustained misuse of over-the-counter NSAIDS
- occupational exposure to certain chemicals

Chemicals that have been found to be high risks for kidney cancer include trichloroethylene (TCE), benzene, benzidine, cadmium, herbicides, and vinyl chloride.