



Kidney Stones

MU Patient Education Series

Definition:

Kidney stones are small, solid masses of crystals that pass from your kidneys to your bladder through a narrow tube, called your ureter. Passing stones from your kidney to your bladder can be extremely painful. Once the stone reaches your bladder, the pain usually subsides. The stone then proceeds to come out in your urine in one, or many, little pieces.

CAUSES:

There are different types of kidney stones. Usually, kidney stones form when there is more of a crystal-forming substance in your urine than the fluid in your urine can dilute. The overabundant substance in the urine determines which type of stone will form. For example, there are calcium stones, uric acid stones and struvite stones that form from urinary tract infections. You are at high risk of acquiring a kidney stone if you do not drink enough fluids, especially water and consequently do not pass enough urine in a day.

SIGNS/SYMPTOMS:

The route down the ureter (the narrow tube connecting your kidneys to your bladder) is the most painful. Before the stones enter this tube, you may not even know the stones are there! When the stones enter the ureter, you will most likely experience severe and sudden pain in your abdominal and groin areas. Some other possible symptoms include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Cramping
- Fever
- Chills
- Blood in your urine
- Cloudy or foul smelling urine



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- Persistent urge to urinate
- Pain on urination
- Severe pain in the side and back, below the ribs

DIAGNOSIS/TESTS:

When diagnosing kidney stones, your physician will look for blockage. Various tests such as a blood test, kidney function test, MRI, CT scan and urinalysis may be performed. Other imaging tests may also be recommended by your physician.

TREATMENT/CARE:

Treating kidney stones is a waiting process and depends on the type and cause of the stone. Stones usually pass on their own in your urine. When you feel a stone pass through, strain your urine and save the stone so your physician can test it. While you wait for your kidney stone to pass, it is essential to drink lots of fluids, especially water. The more you drink, the more urine you will produce, and the sooner your stone will pass. There are other medications and procedures that can be performed to help you pass the stone and ease your pain.

CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF:

Remember that passing a kidney stone is a painful waiting game. You must be patient and let the stone run its course. It will be painful, but if you are experiencing any of the following, you must contact your physician:

- Pain that cannot be controlled by medications
- High fever
- Inability to urinate for over 8 hours
- Increased bladder pain and pressure
- Fainting
- Vomiting and continued nausea
- Blood in your urine

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