

WELLNESS WORKS



You probably don't think about your kidneys all that often, do you? Although they're vital organs, kidneys tend to only catch our attention if there's something wrong with them. But March is Kidney Health Month! This is a good opportunity to discuss one of the most common problems, kidney stones, as well as tips for kidney health.

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Causes and Symptoms of Kidney Stones

Kidney stones are hard deposits made of minerals and salts that form inside your kidneys. They have many causes and can affect any part of your urinary tract, from your kidneys to your bladder. Often, stones form when the urine becomes concentrated, allowing minerals to crystallize and stick together.

Passing kidney stones can be quite painful, but the stones usually cause no permanent damage if they're recognized in a timely fashion. Depending on your situation, you may need nothing more than to take pain medication and drink lots of water to pass a kidney stone. In other instances, surgery may be needed. (See the next article.)

Risk Factors

Factors that increase your risk of developing kidney stones include:

- **Family or personal history.** If someone in your family has kidney stones, you're more likely to develop stones, too. And if you've already had one or more kidney stones, you're at increased risk of developing another.
- **Dehydration.** Not drinking enough water each day can increase your risk of kidney stones. People who live in warm climates and those who sweat a lot may be at higher risk than others.
- **Certain diets.** Eating a diet that's high in protein, salt and sugar may increase your risk of some types of kidney stones. This is especially true with a high-sodium diet.
- **Being obese.** High body mass index (BMI), large waist size and weight gain have been linked to an increased risk of kidney stones.
- **Digestive diseases and surgery.** Gastric bypass surgery, inflammatory bowel disease or chronic diarrhea can affect your body's absorption of calcium and water,

increasing the levels of stone-forming substances in your urine.

Symptoms

A kidney stone may not cause symptoms until it moves around within your kidney or passes into your ureter, the tube connecting the kidney and bladder. At that point, you may experience these signs and symptoms:

- Severe pain in the side and back, below the ribs
- Pain that comes in waves and fluctuates in intensity
- Pain with urination
- Pink, red or brown urine
- Cloudy or foul-smelling urine
- Nausea and vomiting
- Persistent need to urinate
- Urinating more often than usual
- Fever and chills if an infection is present
- Urinating small amounts

Pain caused by a kidney stone may change as the stone moves through your urinary tract. It may get better or worse, or move around, as the stone moves around.



When to See a Doctor

Make an appointment with your doctor if you have any signs and symptoms that worry you, but it's important to seek immediate medical help if you experience these more extreme symptoms:

- Pain so severe that you can't sit still or find a comfortable position
- Pain accompanied by nausea and vomiting
- Pain accompanied by fever and chills
- Blood in your urine
- Difficulty passing urine

Source: [Mayo Clinic](#)



Keeping Your Kidneys Healthy

There are more kidney diseases than just kidney stones, and many of them have very few symptoms until their advanced stages. The best thing most people can do to keep their kidneys healthy and avoid chronic kidney disease is to maintain a generally healthy lifestyle. In particular, these steps can keep your kidneys in good shape:

Keep fit and active: Maintaining a regular exercise routine helps to reduce your blood pressure and therefore reduces the risk of chronic kidney disease.

Keep regular control of your blood sugar level: About half of people who have diabetes develop kidney damage, so it is important for people with diabetes to have regular tests to check their kidney functions.

Maintain a healthy fluid intake: Consuming plenty of fluid helps the kidneys clear sodium, urea and toxins from the body. Most health professionals recommend 6-8 cups of water per day.

Do not smoke: Smoking slows the flow of blood to the kidneys. When less blood reaches the kidneys, it impairs their ability to function properly. Smoking also increases the risk of kidney cancer by about 50 percent.

Do not take over-the-counter pills on a regular basis: Common drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen are known to cause kidney damage and disease if taken regularly.

Source: [World Kidney Day](#)

Treating and Preventing Kidney Stones



Treatment for kidney stones varies, depending on the type of stone and the cause. Most small kidney stones won't require invasive treatment. You may be able to pass a small stone by:

- **Drinking water.** Drinking as much as 2 to 3 quarts (1.9 to 2.8 liters) a day may help flush out your urinary system. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, drink enough fluid — mostly water — to produce clear or nearly clear urine.
- **Pain relievers.** Passing a small stone can cause some discomfort. To relieve mild pain, your doctor may recommend pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or naproxen sodium (Aleve).
- **Medical therapy.** Medications known as alpha blockers relaxes the muscles in your ureter, helping you pass the kidney stone more quickly and with less pain.

However, some larger kidney stones may require more extensive treatment. Some treatments include:

- **Using sound waves to break up stones.** For certain kidney stones, sound waves can be used to create strong vibrations (shock waves) that break the stones into tiny pieces that can be passed in your urine.
- **Surgery to remove very large stones in the kidney.** Sometimes, surgery is necessary. Large stones can be removed using small telescopes and instruments inserted through a small incision in a patient's back.
- **Using a scope to remove stones.** Once the stone is located using a thin tube with a camera attached, special tools can snare the stone or break it into pieces that will pass in your urine.

The best option is to prevent kidney stones before they form. There are some things you can do to lower your risk of getting kidney stones (or getting them again).



You may reduce your risk of kidney stones if you:

- **Drink water throughout the day.** For people with a history of kidney stones, doctors usually recommend passing about 2.6 quarts (2.5 liters) of urine a day. If you live in a hot, dry climate or you exercise frequently, you may need to drink even more water to produce enough urine. If your urine is light and clear, you're likely drinking enough water.
- **Choose a diet low in salt and animal protein.** Reduce the amount of salt you eat and choose nonanimal protein sources, such as beans. Consider using a salt substitute, such as Mrs. Dash.
- **Continue eating calcium-rich foods, but use caution with calcium supplements.** Calcium in food doesn't have an effect on your risk of kidney stones, but calcium supplements may increase your risk. On the other hand, diets low in calcium can increase kidney stone formation in some people. So it's best to continue eating calcium-rich foods unless your doctor advises otherwise.

Ask your doctor for a referral to a dietitian who can help you develop an eating plan that reduces your risk of kidney stones.



Source [Mayo Clinic](#)

Recipe of the Month: Delicious Cauliflower Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. Olive Oil
- 1 c. Chopped green onion
- 4 c. Chicken broth (low sodium)
- 16 oz. Fresh cauliflowerets
- 1/4 c. Almond flour
- 1/4 c. Roasted red peppers
- 1/4 tsp. Hot-pepper sauce*

* Quantity depends on your individual diet.

Preparation:

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add green onions and sauté about 3 minutes or until tender.
3. Add 3 cups broth; bring to boil.
4. Add cauliflower; return to boiling.
5. Reduce Heat to medium-low; cook about 6 minutes or until cauliflower is almost tender.
6. Whisk together flour and remaining 1 cup chicken broth in a small bowl. Stir into saucepan.
7. Bring to boiling; cook, stirring occasionally 2-3 minutes or until soup is thickened.
8. Remove soup from heat.
9. Stir in roasted red peppers and hot-pepper sauce, breaking up red peppers with a wooden spoon.



Serves 4

Nutrition Information:

Calories 194; Protein 15g; Carbohydrate 9g; Total Fat 15g; Trans Fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Potassium 180mg; Sodium 20mg; Phosphorus 40mg; Sugars 1g

Source: [KidneyBuzz](#)