



KIDNEY STONES – DO YOU KNOW THE FACTS?

FACT SHEET 22-040-0212

What are kidney stones?

Kidney stones are small hard deposits of mineral and acid salts that form inside the kidney. They vary in shape and size and can block the flow of urine, causing severe pain.

Who is at risk for kidney stones?

In the United States, the number of people with kidney stones has increased over the past 30 years. Anyone can get a kidney stone but some people are more susceptible:

- **Older people** – The chance of getting a kidney stone increases in men from their 40s to 70s. Women are most likely to get kidney stones in their 50s.
- People with chronic **urinary tract infections**.
- If you are **dehydrated**, you are more likely to develop kidney stones.
- People whose **diet** does not provide essential nutrients needed for good health.
- Those with a **family history** of kidney stones may be more likely to develop them.
- Stones occur more frequently in **men** but the number of women with kidney stones is increasing.
- People with a **history** of kidney stones. Once you've had one stone, you're more likely to get another.

What are the symptoms of kidney stones?

- Severe pain in your side or back, then later, your abdomen or groin
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever and chills
- Urine that smells bad or looks cloudy
- Burning feeling when urinating
- Blood in the urine

What should I do if I think I have a kidney stone?

Contact your health care provider immediately. Your provider will decide the best treatment for you.

How can I prevent kidney stones?

- **Stay hydrated**

Drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day. You are already dehydrated by the time you feel thirsty, so drink water **before** thirst occurs. You are drinking enough water if your urine is clear or pale yellow. Limit intake of coffee, tea, soft drinks, "energy" drinks or other caffeinated beverages that may cause dehydration. Also, limit beverages containing a lot of sugar. Excess sugar may change the acid-base balance of the urine and make conditions more favorable for the formation of kidney stones.

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- **Maintain a healthy weight**

You are more likely to get kidney stones if you are obese. Control your weight through diet and exercise. Avoid extreme weight loss practices such as using laxatives or following fad diets that don't supply enough calories and the nutrients needed for good health.

Build a healthy plate that includes vegetables, whole-grains, fruits, lean protein, and skim or low-fat dairy products. Choose a wide variety of foods. Vary the colors, flavors and textures on your plate.

Choose foods and beverages with little or no added sugars. Select fruit for dessert instead of high-sugar desserts. Limit consumption of beverages that are high in sugar, including fruit-flavored drinks. Drink 100% fruit juice instead and limit to no more than one serving per day.

Eat the right amount of calories for you. Avoid oversized portions and use smaller plates, bowls and glasses. Eat until you are satisfied, not stuffed.

Balance what you eat and drink with how active you are. Also, be active most days of the week. Stay active for a lifetime to keep weight off.

More information on maintaining a healthy weight can be found at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

- **Eat more foods rich in fiber, potassium, and magnesium**

Whole-grain breads and cereals, beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables are rich in these nutrients.

Make at least half of your grains whole by choosing 100% whole-grain breads, cereals, rice, pasta and crackers. Read the Nutrition Facts labels on foods purchased to select those with more whole-grain. More information on whole grains and their health information, go to www.wholegrainscouncil.org.

Eat more beans and nuts, which contain fiber, protein and other essential nutrients. Although nuts are heart-healthy, they are high in fat. Limit portion size to no more than a handful.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables and include these foods in your snacks. Be sure to include a variety of colors: red, orange, dark green, white and blue. Tips on including more fruits and vegetables in your diet are available at www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org.

- **Talk to your health care provider about your risk of kidney stones**

Some medications such as protease inhibitors, antibiotics, and some diuretics increase your risk of kidney stones.

If you've already had a kidney stone, your health care provider may have additional guidelines for you, depending on the type of kidney stone. Also, ask for a nutrition referral to talk to a Registered Dietitian about how your diet can help you prevent kidney stones.