



Patient & Family Guide

2024

Kidney Stones



www.nshealth.ca

Kidney Stones

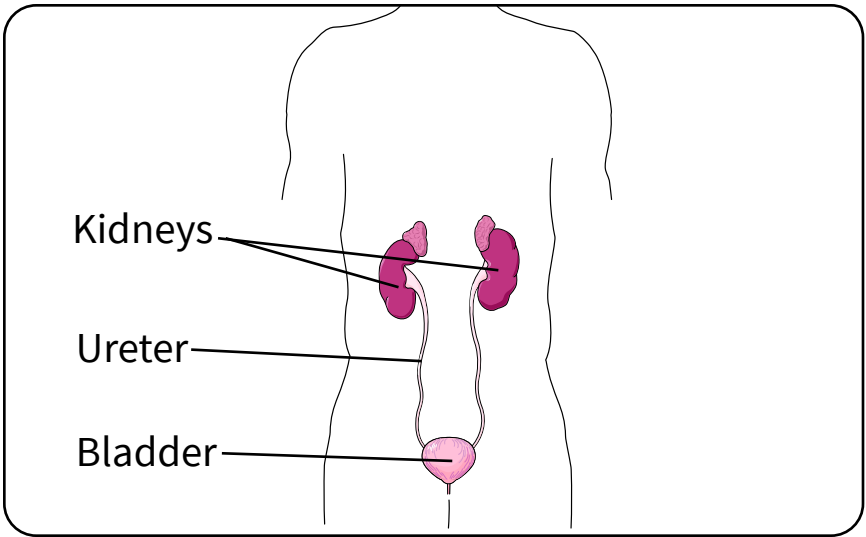
Kidney stones (also called renal calculi) are lumps of crystals that form in your kidneys.

What causes kidney stones to form?

- There are different types of kidney stones and different reasons for kidney stones to form.
- Kidney stones can be caused by:
 - › Eating certain foods
 - › Not drinking enough fluids
 - › Heredity (runs in families)
 - › Certain medications
 - › Certain diseases
- It is important to have your kidney stones tested to find out what type they are. This can help your health care team find ways to prevent new stones from forming.

What are the symptoms?

- You may have kidney stones for years and not have any symptoms.
- Some stones only cause pain if they move from your kidney into your ureter (narrow tube that carries urine [pee] to your bladder).
 - › A stone in your ureter can cause blood in your urine.



- Kidney stones usually cause pain. They may also cause an infection.
- If a kidney stone causes a blockage over time, it may damage your kidney.

What will happen in the Emergency Department (E.D.)?

- Your health care team will check how much pain you have.
- You may get pain medication. This may be:
 - › injected in your arm using a needle

OR

- › given through an intravenous (I.V.) tube into a vein in your arm.
- If you are dehydrated (do not have enough fluids), you may get fluids through an I.V.

- You will have:
 - › a blood test to check how your kidneys are working.
 - › a urine test to check for blood in your urine and signs of infection.
- You may also have an X-ray or a CT scan to check where the kidney stones are.
- You may need to stay in the E.D. to help manage your pain.
- Once the kidney stones pass from your ureter to your bladder, you will have less pain.
 - › This pain may last for a few days and usually goes away without special treatment.

If you do not pass your kidney stones in the E.D.:

- You will get pain medication to take at home.
- Talk with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or a urologist (specialist) as soon as you can.
- You may be asked to strain your urine at home for a short time to check for stones. Your health care team will show you how to do this.
 - › Collect any stones you find and give them to your primary health care provider or urologist for testing. The test results can help your health care provider figure out how to stop new stones from forming.

- › Some people never find stones in their urine, even if they have a lot of pain.

If you do not pass your kidney stones at home:

- You may need to be admitted to the hospital to:
 - › manage your pain.
 - › have surgery to remove the kidney stones.
- If you are admitted to the hospital, your urologist and nurses will give you information about the tests and procedures you will need. If you have any questions, please ask.

If you need surgery:

- A urologist will remove your kidney stones in the Operating Room (O.R.).
- They may use a machine that uses sound waves to break up the stones (called lithotripsy).

What will happen when I go home?

- If you were given pain medication through an I.V.:
 - › Do not drive, use machinery, or drink alcohol for 24 hours (1 day).
 - › You must have a responsible adult drive you home from the E.D.
 - › You must have a responsible adult stay with you for 8 hours in case you need help.

- **If you were given pain medication to take at home:**
 - › Ask your nurse or pharmacist if it is OK to drive, use machinery, or drink alcohol while taking this medication.
 - › Take your pain medication as told by your health care provider in the E.D.

Remember, you should have less pain than when you came to the E.D. If you have more pain, go to the nearest E.D. right away.

- Drink about 2 to 3 litres of water a day while trying to pass the kidney stones.
- Strain your urine using the strainer you were given. Ask your primary health care provider when you can stop doing this.
- If this was your first time having kidney stones:
 - › Put any stones you find in a clean, dry container.
 - › Take the container to your primary health care provider. They will have the stones tested.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away if:

- You have a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F).
- Your pain **does not** go away after taking the pain medication you were prescribed.
- You start to vomit (throw up).

Follow-up

Make an appointment with your primary health care provider.

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Emergency Services

Illustration by: LifeART Super Anatomy 1 Images, Copyright © 1994,
TechPool Studios Corp. USA

Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WA85-0240 © May 2024 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed May 2027 or sooner, if needed.