



Symptoms of kidney stones

Some stones are excruciatingly obvious while others pass painlessly. Look out for:

- Middle to lower backache
- Gripping, shifting pain below the ribs, back or side, sometimes spreading to the groin lasting 20-60 minutes
- Fever and chills if there's associated infection
- Cloudy, frothy, smelly, dark, bloody or painful urine
- Nausea and vomiting
- Urge to urinate frequently
- Sediment or stones in toilet after urination

It's enough enduring kidney stones once but when they return within five years in 30-50 per cent of cases, it's worth taking preventative steps.

The *silent* killer

Kidney disease is silent. Around 1 in 10 Australians have chronic kidney disease. Many are unaware they have it until their kidneys virtually stop working.

Kidneys purify blood, flush fluid, balance electrolytes, excrete acid, produce red blood cells, control blood pressure and activate vitamin D. When your kidney function starts to decline, fluid can accumulate in your body, such as swelling in your ankles and feet, and even your lungs which may make it difficult to breathe. Fluid build-up may also lead to high blood pressure which will also add to the deterioration of kidney function. It will also mean your body can't efficiently get rid of waste products, so toxins build-up and generalised fatigue, loss of appetite and nausea results. Ultimately impaired kidneys can cause kidney failure demanding dialysis or a transplant.

When we damage, dehydrate or overload our kidneys they're prone to stones. Kidney

stones are concentrated minerals and can be as small as sand or as big as golf balls. The most common are calcium oxalate stones caused by an over accumulation of oxalates in the body (oxalates are a naturally occurring substance found in many foods); followed by struvite stones from urinary tract infections (UTIs); cystine stones from an inherited disorder; and uric acid stones from excess protein, fructose or acid.

Hot climates, genetics, obesity, dehydration, diabetes, chronic medication, hypertension, overactive parathyroid gland or recurrent UTIs can all affect our likelihood of developing kidney stones. People of African, Asian and Aboriginal descent have a higher incidence of kidney stones, as do men.

Go H2O: Drink two litres a day for adults – more at night if you've had stones and if perspiration or urination increases. Minimise soft drinks and soy milk as they can increase calcium oxalate stones and alcohol can exacerbate uric acid stones. Dandelion tea, pomegranate, lemon and celery juice help dissolve stones.

Avoid UTIs: Struvite stones are formed from magnesium and ammonia through

apple cider vinegar can cleanse and support kidneys

bacteria during a UTI. They can grow very quickly into staghorn calculi and be fatal. Avoid UTIs with proper hygiene, alkaline diet and probiotics. Address a UTI immediately to minimise risk.

Balance blood pressure: High blood pressure doubles the risk for kidney stones by inflaming and obstructing kidney channels.

Stabilise sugar: Sugar interferes with calcium and magnesium absorption. Diabetics should receive regular kidney function tests.

No smoking: Smoking slows blood flow to the kidneys, impairing their ability to function properly.

Manage medication: Medications can damage kidneys such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and OTC pain medication especially if taken with alcohol.

Low protein and purines: Reduce uric acid by minimising high purine and protein items such as alcohol, red meat, organ meats and shellfish.

Kidney Qi: Chinese medicine recommends promoting kidney circulation by covering them, exercising, tapping them and keeping feet arches warm. A synergistic blend of Chinese herbs can be used to support and tonify the kidneys including rehmannia, horny goat weed, goji berries and cuscuta. These herbs help to address a deficiency of

Increase your fibre High-fibre foods contain phytates which help prevent crystallisation of calcium salts.



Jing which can lead to symptoms of fatigue, exhaustion, menstrual and menopausal problems, and weakness and pain in the legs and lower back.

Kidney cleanse: Alkalisng greens are a good option to help maintain an alkaline environment which your kidneys love! Aloe vera juice is also a great cleanser, mix with freshly squeezed lemon juice and water – the citrate in the lemon binds to calcium preventing it from forming stones.

Diet: Foods that can cleanse and support kidneys include apple cider vinegar, asparagus, berries, cabbage, cauliflower, cherries, garlic, kale, kidney beans, onion, watermelon and red capsicum. If you've had calcium oxalate stones, you may want to avoid certain oxalate rich foods such as nuts and nut products, rhubarb, spinach and wheat bran. Limiting salt in your diet is also recommended as it increases urinary calcium.

Supplements: Balance is key with kidney care. Excessive or insufficient calcium, vitamin C, D and potassium can contribute to stones. Magnesium helps lower urinary oxalate and vitamin B6 can decrease kidney stone incidence and symptoms.

Remember your kidneys are vital to your health! If you are at all concerned about your kidney health, consult your doctor for a kidney health check.

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