

published in Reader's Digest,  
12 December 2018

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When life gives you kidney stones, it might help to make lemonade. Kidney stones cause symptoms in 9% of the population and they can be serious. Find out more.

### Agony

When kidney stones block urine flow, the kidney may stretch, causing pain akin to or worse than childbirth.

### Blood

If the stone scratches the kidney or ureters (the tubes that connect the kidneys to the bladder), blood may appear in the urine.

### Calcium

Kidney stones are crystals made from chemicals in the urine. The '[Oxford Stone Group](#) [4]' describe how the urine must be saturated with these chemicals for the stones to form – a bit like growing a crystal in a jar in school chemistry lessons.

They're commonly made of something called calcium oxalate....but cutting down on [calcium consumption](#) [5] is not advised, since it can actually increase the likelihood of kidney stones through some complex chemistry.

### Drinking enough

Dehydration is a common cause of kidney stones.

### Egyptians

One of the earliest recorded kidney stones is that found in an [Egyptian mummy](#) [6].

## Fever

A high temperature does not usually accompany a kidney stone – if it does, it may herald an associated infection.

## Gout

[Gout \[7\]](#) can double the risk of kidney stones in men. The conditions are similar in that gout also involves the build-up of crystals, in the joints and tissues.

## History

Kidney stone formers include Napoleon I, Oliver Cromwell, [William Harvey \[8\]](#) and Isaac Newton.

## Infection

Bacteria can build up behind a kidney stone, leading to a kidney infection.

## Jewellery

“When we break up [kidney stones \[9\]](#) surgically, some of them are indeed quite beautiful — like a geode, like the rings on a tree, or something you’d hang on your wall,” says Dr. Brian Matlaga. Any one for kidney stone jewellery?

## Kidney damage

Kidney stone formers have a higher risk of developing [chronic kidney disease \[10\]](#), perhaps because the kidney is stretched and damaged by the build-up of urine in the ureters.

## Lithotripsy

Is the name given to the procedure in which kidney stones are shattered by soundwaves so that the smaller pieces can then be passed more easily in the urine.

## Medication

Is usually directed towards pain relief. For those at high risk of kidney stones, some types of [water tablets \[11\]](#) can also help.

## Nausea

Feeling sick is a common symptom of kidney stones.

## Oxalates

These are natural substances found in foods such as nuts, spinach, chocolate, rhubarb, beetroot and strawberries. Excessive consumption can lead to kidney stones made up of calcium oxalate.

## Parathyroid

The parathyroid glands in your neck control the amount of calcium in your blood. High levels of [parathyroid hormone \[12\]](#) can cause kidney stones to form.

## Questions

Information and support can be found at groups such as ‘[Beat Kidney Stones’ \[13\]](#) and [Kidney Research UK \[14\]](#).

## Restless

The pain of kidney stones can make you restless and writhing.

## Size

Most stones are small, being only a few millimetres in diameter, and can be passed easily in the urine. Stones larger than one centimetre are more troublesome; the largest kidney stone is reported to have weighed 1.36 kg!

## Tea strainer

Your doctor may ask you to collect the stone by urinating through a tea strainer, a stocking or a coffee filter paper. Study of the stone will help inform treatment decisions.

## Undetected

Many stones cause no symptoms at all, and are instead a “chance” finding on a CT scan. They may stay in the kidney or pass out painlessly in the urine.

## Vitamin C

Large doses of [Vitamin C \[15\]](#) may increase the amount of oxalate in your urine, increasing the risk of kidney stone formation. “A lot isn’t necessarily better” when it comes to vitamin C and the kidney, writes [Harvard Health \[16\]](#).

## Weight

Being [overweight \[17\]](#) can increase the risk of kidney stones developing.

## X ray

Can be useful in tracking the passage of a kidney stone. CT scans and ultrasound are also useful.

## Young people

The peak age of onset for kidney stone formation is 20-30 years.

## Zoo

Animals such as [Squeegee the seal \[18\]](#) and [Cloe the snow leopard \[19\]](#) were diagnosed with kidney stones; Cloe underwent lithotripsy to shatter her stones, in a world-first experiment.



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**Source URL:** <https://www.helencowan.co.uk/z-kidney-stones>

## Links

[\[1\] https://www.readersdigest.co.uk/health/health-conditions/an-a-to-z-on-kidney-stones](https://www.readersdigest.co.uk/health/health-conditions/an-a-to-z-on-kidney-stones) [2] <https://www.helencowan.co.uk/.../tags/kidney> [3] <https://www.helencowan.co.uk/.../tags/surgery> [4] <https://www.ndm.ox.ac.uk/osg/stone-formation> [5] [https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/kidneystones\\_prevent](https://www.kidney.org/atoz/content/kidneystones_prevent) [6] <https://www.ndm.ox.ac.uk/osg/history-of-stone-disease> [7] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0085253815494232> [8]

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<https://www.readersdigest.co.uk/health/health-conditions/the-heart-hero-who-discovered-the-heartbeat> [9]  
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<https://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/> [15] <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/11066-kidney-stones-oxalate-controlled-diet> [16] <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/high-dose-vitamin-c-linked-to-kidney-stones-in-men-201302055854> [17] <https://www.renalandurologynews.com/kidney-stones/kidney-stone-disease-tied-to-obesity/article/163846/> [18] <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/elderly-male-harbor-seal-dies-smithsonians-national-zoo> [19] <https://www.snowleopard.org/first-snow-leopard-lithotripsy-performed-at-big-cat-rescue/>