

 medabouthealth  · Aug 31 · 5 min read



Ureter Stones — how do I get rid of them?



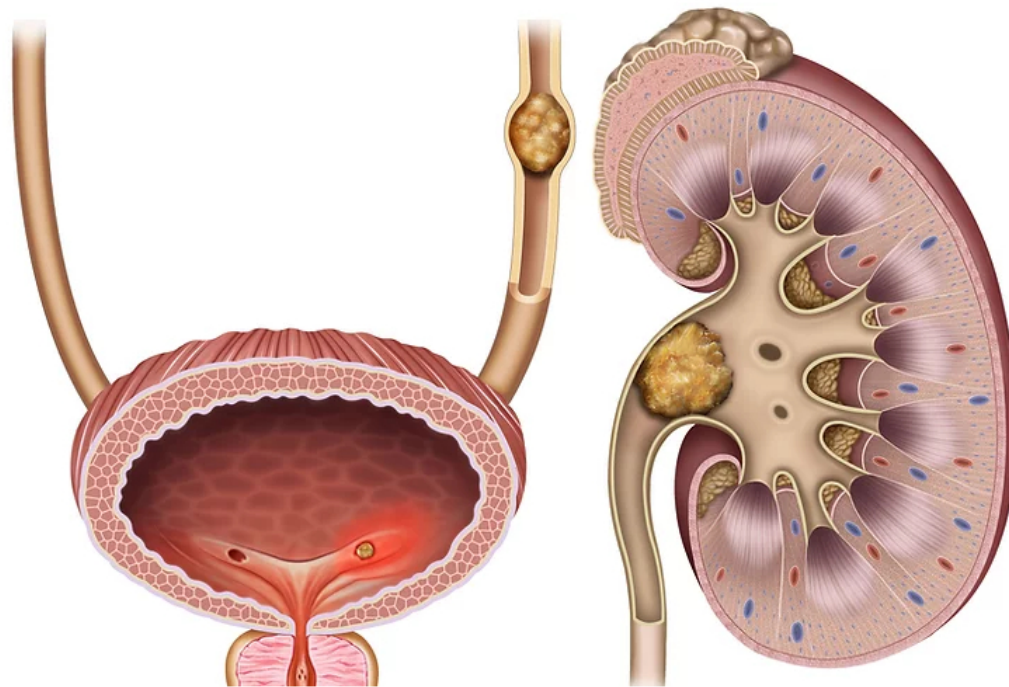
Did you know that the largest ureter stone ever removed was 60 grams, with a length of 22cm?

Sometimes, pebble-like structures can form in your kidney. These are known as kidney stones. Kidney stones smaller than 4mm are usually passed out with your urine in 1-2 weeks, while larger ones take longer.

When your kidney stones are too large to be passed out, they get stuck in the ureter, hence, the term “ureter stones”. The ureter refers to the tube connecting your kidney and bladder.

In this article, we’ve enlisted the help of Consultant Urologist and Medical Director of [Aare Urocare](#), [Dr Fiona Wu](#), to let us in on everything we need to know about ureter stones.

How will I know if I have Ureter Stones?



Symptoms of ureter stones include:

- Pain in your lower back or flanks
- Nausea or vomiting
- Bloody urine
- Pain when peeing
- Cloudy or dark-coloured urine
- Inability to pee
- Urine flow that stops and starts

While the exact cause of ureter stones is unknown, certain factors could put you at risk of developing them. These risk factors include eating too much protein or salt, chronic dehydration, overconsumption of certain supplements, obesity or genetic predisposition.

Why should I get rid of Ureter Stones?

Sometimes, ureter stones are too large to pass through the urinary tract smoothly on their own. When left untreated, these stones can cause dangerous complications such as:

- **Hydronephrosis** — When one or both kidneys swell due to blockage of the ureter
- **Renal damage** — When the kidneys are not able to function properly

- **Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)** — Bacterial infections in your urinary tract

At best, these complications can cause mild inconveniences, such as painful urination, pain in the lower back or frequent urination. However, these complications can escalate into conditions such as kidney failure or sepsis, both of which are life-threatening.

Hence, it is crucial to seek medical help when you have symptoms of this condition. “Early treatment of stones can prevent complications and unnecessary pain”, advises Dr Fiona Wu.

How do I get rid of my Ureter Stones?

As far as home remedies are concerned, liquids are your best friend. From drinking more water to various types of juices, consuming more liquid may help. This encourages frequent urination, which aids the passage of your ureter stone.

The best thing to do is visit your doctor. Your doctor will first determine the size and type of stones you have via a series of diagnostic tests: an X-ray, urinalysis, urine culture, intravenous pyelography or a computed tomography (CT) scan.

Thereafter, depending on the size of your stone and the severity of your symptoms, you and your doctor will work on a treatment plan based on your condition.

Stones smaller than 4mm

If your stones are smaller than 4mm, your doctor may choose to prescribe medication.

Examples include:

- **Pain relievers (analgesics)** – To reduce discomfort/pain until the stone has been passed out.
- **Alpha-blockers, calcium channel blockers and corticosteroids** – These are used in Medical Expulsive Therapy (MET), which increases the dilation of the ureter, allowing the stones to pass through more easily.

Ureter stones up to 1cm in diameter

Extracorporeal shockwave lithotripsy (ESWL) works best for stones smaller than 1cm.

The patient first lies down on a table. Then, the doctor starts up a lithotripter, which can locate the ureter stones using X-ray and generate shockwaves to shatter them.

The intensity of the shockwaves is gradually increased to ensure minimal discomfort for the patient. After 45-60 minutes, the stones are crushed to sand-like fragments, which are passed out with urine.

ESWL is less effective if the patient has preexisting conditions, high body mass index (BMI), large stones or cystine stones. This procedure may also be risky for pregnant women and people with implanted devices.

Ureter stones up to 2cm in diameter

When the stone’s diameter is around 2cm, ureteroscopies may be recommended.

A ureteroscope (thin, flexible, hollow tube with a camera attached at the end) is inserted via the urethra. Through this tube, basket devices and optic fibres can reach the stone.

The optic fibre emits a laser to fragment the stone, while the basket device takes out those fragments and the smaller stones or the fragments. Patients with large stones or a history of urinary tract reconstruction should avoid this treatment.

For recurrent stone formers

Aare Urocare provides diagnostic tests and stone prevention supplements to significantly lower your risk of forming kidney stones.

Surgery

When you are unsuited to other treatment methods or fail to pass out the ureter stones using other treatments, surgery is recommended.

One possible surgical method might be **Percutaneous nephrolithotomy/nephrolithotripsy (PCNL)**.

This procedure is recommended for stones larger than 2cm and located in the upper ureter. Its exact location is found via X-rays or ultrasound, then an incision is made near the kidneys.

To reach the stone, a nephroscope is inserted through the incision. Once the stone is found, pneumatic lithotripsy or laser lithotripsy is used to crush it.

Pneumatic lithotripsy crushes ureteral stones via vibrating, mechanical force, while laser lithotripsy uses a laser to fragment the ureteral stone. A basket device at the end of the nephroscope may also be used to remove smaller ureter stones and stone fragments.

Is there a difference between percutaneous Nephrolithotomy and Nephrolithotripsy?

Nephrolithotomy is the removal of an intact stone. Nephrolithotripsy is the removal of stone fragments left behind from previous treatments.

The bottom line

As you can tell from this article, getting rid of ureter stones isn't always the easiest thing to do. However, with lots of fluids, patience and time, you might just get them out without needing medication, surgery or ureteroscopy.

Additionally, prevention is always better than treatment. Some ways you could do so are by staying hydrated and maintaining a balanced diet. Moderate your consumption of animal protein, sodium, calcium and oxalate to reduce your risk of developing ureter stones.

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