

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT KIDNEY STONES

## What is a kidney stone?

- A kidney stone is a solid piece of material that forms in a kidney from substances in the urine.
- A stone may stay in the kidney or break loose and move down the urinary tract. A small stone may pass all the way out of the body without too much pain.
- A larger stone may get stuck. It can block the flow of urine and cause great pain.

## What can my doctor do about a large stone?

- If you have a stone that does not pass by itself, your doctor may need to remove it. Your doctor may choose one of the following ways to do this.

### Shock Waves

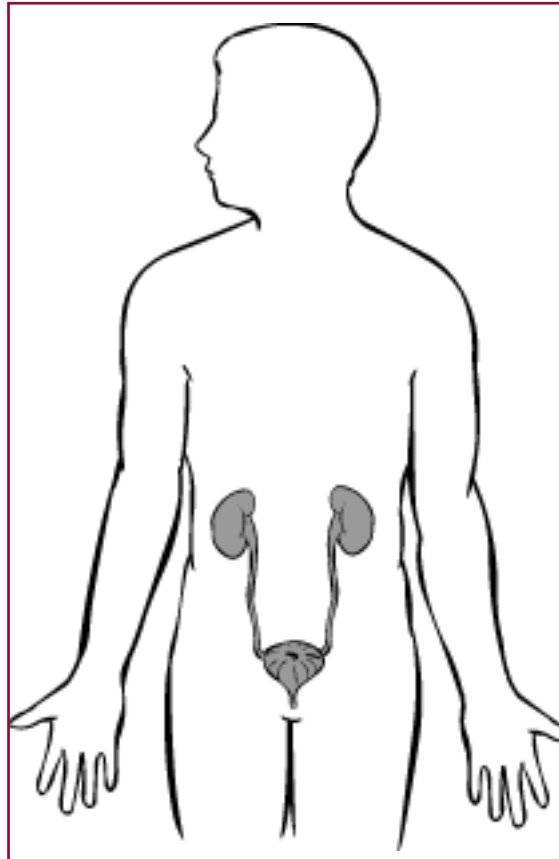
- A machine sends shock waves to the kidney stone. This breaks the stone into small pieces that pass out of your body with your urine. This method is called extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL). Lithotripsy is a Greek word that means stone crushing.
- With one type of shock machine, you sit in a tub of water. With the other type, you lie on a table. A technician directs the sound waves to the stone.

### Tunnel Surgery

- The doctor makes a small cut on your back. A special instrument passes through a narrow tunnel to the stone and removes it. This method is called percutaneous nephrolithotomy.

### Ureteroscope

- A ureteroscope looks like a long wire. The doctor puts it into the patient's urethra through the bladder and up the ureter, and directs it to the stone. This is done using a camera that lets the doctor see the stone. A tiny cage catches the stone and pulls it out, or the doctor may be able to destroy it with a laser.
- Ask your doctor which method is right for you.



## Points to Remember

- Most stones pass out of the body without a doctor's help.
- See your doctor if you have severe pain in your back or side that will not go away.
- See your doctor if you have blood in your urine—the urine will look pink.
- In the future, after the stone is gone, drink lots of water to prevent more kidney stones from forming.
- Talk with your doctor about other ways to keep from getting more stones.

## For More Information

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[kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/stones\\_ez/index.htm](http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/stones_ez/index.htm)

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:  
What I Need to Know About Kidney Stones

[kidney.niddk.nih.gov/spanish/pubs/stones\\_ez/index.htm](http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/spanish/pubs/stones_ez/index.htm)

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:  
What I Need to Know About Kidney Stones (Spanish)