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KIDNEY STONES

Information and Discharge Instructions

There are many types and sizes of kidney stones. However, they are all formed in the same way. A kidney stone begins as a tiny particle. When other particles begin to collect and stick together, the stone grows in size. Stones can range in size from particles resembling sand to stones as large as an egg. A stone may grow in size where it is located, or a piece of it may travel down the urinary tract until it is trapped at a narrow point and begin to form another stone.

When the stone blocks the flow of urine into the bladder, the urine builds up and causes pressure within the kidney. This pressure can cause severe pain, with or without nausea. The pain is usually sudden and may last from minutes to days. During the early stages, some patients have only a dull, aching, or heavy feeling. Sometimes there may be no sensation and the first clue the patient may have is when the stone is actually passed from the body.

The main goal of treatment is to preserve kidney function. At least three quarts of fluids should be taken daily. The patient should also avoid taking excessive amounts of minerals and vitamins, especially Vitamins D and C.

Methods for eliminating the stone range from simply waiting for the stone to pass on it's own, to surgical removal of the stone. The urine must be meticulously strained during the waiting period. Any stone recovered should be saved so that it can be analyzed. If it is decided that the stone will not be passed before undesirable complications occur, then the mechanical or surgical intervention is necessary.

About 25% of patients have stones again. This usually happens within a two to three year period, but it may happen as much as twenty years later. Prevention involves a lifelong program. Fluid intake (three quarts daily) should be divided equally, if possible, over each twenty-four hour period. Patients are usually advised to drink at least one glassful every hour during the day and two glassfuls at bedtime. In order to plan diet restrictions or modifications, a stone analysis report is obtained. Your doctor will discuss the results of the report with you and determine what, if any, dietary instructions are needed to prevent your type of stone formation.

All patients with kidney stones or a history of stones should report any of the following symptoms to their physician.

1. Pain in urination
2. Blood in your urine or cloudy urine
3. Frequency of urination
4. Temperature over 101 F
5. Flank pain radiating to the groin, unrelieved by pain medication

(over)