

Drink more water to avoid kidney stones

Kidney stones are crystallized minerals in the kidney or urinary tract. They can be excreted if they are small in size. But, if the stones exceed 20 mm in diameter, people with these stones may experience severe pain in the lower back, groin or abdomen.

The question of what causes kidney stones is a complicated one. It could be due to various factors including deficiency in urinary citrate, dehydration, unbalanced diet or other diseases. Family history may also be a contributing factor, because of similar dietary habits and lifestyles among family members.

The most common kidney stone is composed of calcium oxalate crystals, which occur in approximately 75 per cent of patients and are usually less than 20 mm in width. Between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of patients develop struvite stones that are associated with bacterial infection. The others suffer from uric acid stones, due to high uric acid levels in the urine. Kidney stone symptoms vary from no symptom at all to back pain, nausea, vomiting, irritability, abdominal pain, and blood in the urine. If infection occurs, the victim will experience pain when urinating and run a fever and experience chills as well.

Small kidney stones (less than 5 mm) may not need treatment. Pain relievers and muscle relaxants can facilitate their discharge. For severe cases, laser or extracorporeal shock waves can be used to break the stones into small pieces and discharged. Ureteroscopy can be also performed to remove ureteric stones.

To prevent kidney stones from occurring, one should drink plenty of water every day (1.5 to 2 litres). Intake of oxalate, abundant in cola, tea, coffee, fruit juice and nuts, etc, should be reduced. Regular health checks are essential for early detection.