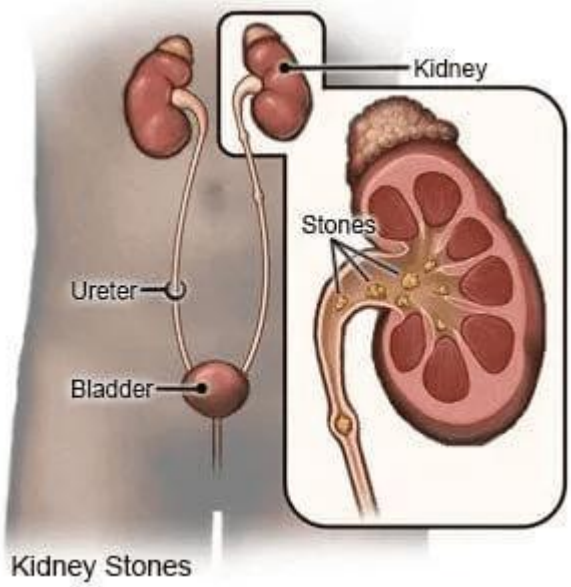
Kidney Stones can cause a person to be miserable. They can also be present for years without causing any symptoms or medical problems. If a person has a kidney stone, and has pain, is the stone causing the pain or are they unrelated? What medical history and physical exam will help figure this out? What testing will help answer this question?

If you have a kidney stone should you treat it? If yes, what are the reasonable treatment options? What are the risks of treatment? What are the risks of not treating? At Twin River Urology we will take as much time as you need to explore these issues.

What are kidney stones?

It is normal for all people to have salts and minerals in their kidneys. Sometimes, these salts and minerals clump together and form crystals (and can eventually further come together as "stones").

Most kidney crystals and stones are small enough to pass easily out of the body. But sometimes, they can get stuck on the way out, typically between the kidney and the bladder (see figure below). This can cause pain.



What are the symptoms of kidney stones?

Symptoms can include:

●Pain in the side or in the lower part of the belly or back. It can also cause pain in the groin, including the labia or scrotum

●Blood in the urine (most often red, but can be tan or brown)

●Nausea or vomiting

●Needing to urinate more frequently and urgently

Some people do not have any symptoms and kidney stones are found incidentally while doing an imaging test, such as a CT scan or ultrasound. This raises the question as to whether they need to be treated or not.

How We Evaluate for Kidney Stones

We start with getting a medical history and performing a physical exam, as well as obtaining a urine sample. Depending on the results, we may then recommend bloodwork and/or imaging.

When a person does have a stone causing kidney obstruction and/or pain, we think of our work in three phases:

Phase One is the work to get the patient medically safe, and out of severe pain. This sometimes means arranging to place a temporary internal drainage tube (stent) between the kidney and the bladder.

Phase Two is the treatment of the stone itself. This can sometimes include medical support while a patient passes the stone or, in some rare cases, help dissolving the stone. In other patients' treatment can mean a procedure that might include laser fragmentation of the stone or external shockwaves to break it up.

Phase Three of treatment is trying to understand why a stone formed and coming up with an evidence-based plan focusing on dietary and lifestyle changes to help prevent a stone from ever forming again.