

Renal colic

RFQs

- Have you vomited with this pain?
- Are you able to pass urine? How many times a day?
- Do you have a fever?
- I'd like to examine your tummy now, if that's OK?

Provide

I can hear that you have been in agony, and there is blood in your urine. This is almost certainly renal colic. There is probably a stone in the pipe from your kidney to the bladder. I'd also suggest that we give you an anti-inflammatory pain killer to relieve your pain. Have you had any problems with that sort of pain killer in the past? Take it after food, or least with a drink of milk, whenever you get the pain (twice a day for naproxen).

(Since you have been vomiting, it might be sensible for me to give you a pain-killing injection (Diclofenac) and consider sending you to hospital. What do you think?)

Since you are still in pain, I would recommend that we give you a tablet (terazosin) to take daily until the pain has gone. This tablet may encourage the stone to pass through faster (NNT 4).

Are you happy for me to arrange an urgent CT scan, to look for stones in your kidneys? We should also do some blood tests (U+E, calcium and urate). You don't have a temperature, but I'd still like to send a sample of your urine off to the lab to check for infection. Would you mind sieving your urine to see if we can get a stone to send off to the lab to analyse?

Most people will pass the stone within a week (86% within a week, and 90% within a month). It may be worth looking at your diet and your fluid intake. Would you mind reading the information leaflet about kidney stones from patient.info online? (Perhaps you would be happy to pee through a sieve, until after all your symptoms have gone, to see if you can catch a stone. If you do: please bring it in so that we can send it to the lab for analysis.)

No, surprisingly calcium in the diet doesn't increase your chances of getting stones. Avoid vitamin C supplements though. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. Swap sodium chloride (normal salt) to low salt (mostly potassium chloride) for cooking, and for adding to food, it tastes the same. Avoid processed food, unless it is labelled as low in salt. Restrict your intake of meat and shellfish. Dairy is fine.

A specialist may occasionally recommend a medication to prevent stones, depending on the type of stones (thiazide for hypercalciuria, allopurinol for uric acid stones).

Safety net:

Let me see you again if you are still in pain next week.

If we can't control your pain it may be worth admitting you to hospital, particularly if you are vomiting. Please let us know urgently if this is happening.