High Water Intake
For People With Urinary Tract Stones

If you have had one kidney stone you have a better than 60% chance of having another stone within five years. A second stone will increase that chance even more. However, there are things you can do to greatly reduce these odds. For example, different types of stones are caused by different metabolic abnormalities. Your urologist will probably do special tests to see if s/he can find a specific cause or treatment.

No matter what kind of stone or metabolic abnormality you may have, drinking large amounts of water has been shown to greatly reduce the changes of having another stone in the future. The next sections will tell you what we mean by large amounts of water.

How much water is enough for a person who is a stone former?
Generally speaking, it is a lot more than most people think. You will notice, that the word ***water*** is used, not liquids. This is because a stone former should be drinking water. If you are among the people who like liquids other than water, you should simply change your habit. Water is what you need; not milk, tea, coffee, juices, artificial drinks, etc. You can drink well water, spring water, soft water, tap water. They will all do the job. You should remember that you will need to drink large amounts of water for the rest of your life.

It takes a few months to get used to drinking such large amounts. Once you have formed the habit, your body will adjust automatically. It will even be difficult for you to switch back. You should drink enough water in a 24-hour period to make at least two quarts of urine a day. In most cases, this means that you must drink ***at least*** three quarts (12 cups) of water or one eight ounce glass every 1 ½ hours while you are awake. On hot days you may need to drink at least one gallon (16 cups) of water a day because of all the water that is lost through sweat and other non-urinary ways. Occasionally, you should measure your 24-hour urinary output to be sure you are drinking enough.

How can I tell if I am drinking enough water?
Naturally it is hard for people to measure their urine output every day. These tips will help you see if you are drinking enough water:

- Your urine should always be pale yellow.

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- Most stones start forming at night. Stone crystals in the urine have a chance to settle in the kidney and form a stone. For this reason, it is important for you to drink a few glasses of water before you go to bed. This will make you wake up to urinate. Drink some more water before you go back to bed.

- Always have water handy. If you are going someplace where you think that you may not have easy access to water, take some with you.

- Never pass a water fountain without taking a drink.

- If you have serious heart disease or kidney failure, you should talk to your doctor before starting this water-drinking program.

- Remember that, no other liquids will substitute for water in this situation.

What about citric juices?
Your doctor may suggest drinking orange juice or lemonade. These "high citrate" drinks help prevent calcium stones.

Again, remember that this water-drinking program should continue for the rest of your life.

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