

# Basic Steps to Reduce Your Risk for Kidney Stones

Six diet choices you can make now to prevent future stones and improve your overall health



## 1. Drink more fluids.

Most kidney stone formers should increase their fluid intake by one liter each day (about 34 oz) above what they normally drink. Make fluid always available by carrying a water bottle with you. The fluid does not have to be plain water. Try to drink enough to keep your urine clear and colorless.



## 2. Keep your salt intake low to moderate.

A high salt intake increases your risk for stones by raising urinary calcium and lowering urinary citrate levels. Both of these things makes it easier for stones to form in your urine. Aim for 2300mg or less of sodium a day.



## 3. Eat less meat.

A high meat intake causes an increase in urinary uric acid, calcium, and oxalate, all of which lead to an increase in stone development. Aim for 6 ounces or less of animal meat a day (including beef, pork, chicken, and seafood).



## 4. Eat more fruits and vegetables.

Eating fruits and vegetables will increase your urinary citrate (an important kidney stone preventer) and is also a great alternative way to increase your fluid intake. You can also try drinking orange juice or adding lemon juice to your fluids.



## 5. Keep a normal dietary calcium intake.

Calcium from dairy or other naturally high calcium foods can reduce your risk of stones. In contrast, calcium supplements (in pill form) increases your risk of stones . Therefore, getting your calcium intake through your diet is preferred unless your doctor advises you to take calcium supplements for a medical condition.



## 6. Moderate your intake of high oxalate content foods.

These include foods such as spinach, rhubarb, chard, beets, nuts, and sweet potatoes. For most patients, a normal amount of these foods is ok. However, for some patients a high oxalate intake increases their risk of stones. Testing by your doctor can help identify whether this applies to you.

**Sodium:** We recommend that stone formers aim to follow the FDA's guideline of limiting salt intake to 2300 mg of sodium a day in the general population and 1500 mg of sodium a day in those with hypertension, African Americans, or middle aged and older adults. 2300 mg is equivalent to about 1 teaspoon of table salt.

The best way to determine the salt content of your food is to read the nutrition label. Processed foods tend to contain higher amounts of salt. Choose low sodium options whenever possible.

1 cup of canned chicken noodle soup contains 870 mg of sodium

A fried chicken drumstick contains 310 mg of sodium

A serving of shrimp contains 240 mg of sodium

2 slices of white bread contains 200 mg of sodium

15 potato chips contain 180 mg of sodium

1 container of strawberry yogurt contains 85 mg of sodium

1 tomato contains 20 mg of sodium

In addition to lowering the risk of stones, a low sodium intake helps to control or prevent high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease, stroke, heart failure, and kidney disease.

**Protein:** We recommend that most stone formers try to reduce their meat intake to 6 oz a day. This includes all types of meat: beef, pork, poultry, and seafood.

The USDA has recommended a daily allowance of 5-6 oz of protein intake among adults. They also recommend choosing non-meat protein foods such as nuts and beans instead of meat sources. Protein from non-meat sources does not appear to increase the risk of stones.

A small steak contains about 3-4 oz of protein.

A quarter pound hamburger with cheese contains 4 oz of protein.

A chicken breast contains about 5 oz of protein, a chicken thigh about 2.5 oz, a chicken drumstick about 1.5 oz.

One 5 oz can of tuna contains 5 oz of protein.

1 medium egg contains 1 oz of protein.

Lowering your animal protein intake and eating more fruits and vegetables also benefits your overall health by limiting the amount of saturated fats and cholesterol in your diet. This helps to reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.