

RENAL COLIC

Renal colic is the pain that is caused by a stone (or other material) causing a blockage to the flow of urine from the kidney to the bladder. The pain is usually felt in the flank or loin but often radiates around to the front and down toward the groin. As those who have had kidney stones will know the pain can be extremely severe and debilitating at times and may require narcotic analgesia to obtain relief.

The likelihood that a stone will pass through to the bladder on its own is largely dependent on its size. Stones up to 4mm to 5mm have about a 90% chance of passing whereas stones larger than 8mm or so have only got a 10% chance of passing. Stones will move down along the ureter (the tube that joins the kidney to the bladder) until the diameter of the stone is larger than the ureter. To diagnose renal colic your Doctor will usually have arranged a CT scan which will quite clearly show the stone and the dilated ureter and kidney above. Plain X-rays may also be used to help determine the composition of the stone. Some stones are amenable to dissolution therapy but these make up only about 10% to 15% of the total stones we see. Hard stones containing Calcium either need to pass spontaneously or need to be removed by surgical intervention. If you have renal colic it is reasonable to try to strain your urine to see whether or not the stone passes out of your body. This will obviously let you know that the stone is gone but it can also be sent for chemical analysis.

If you have mild pain it is reasonable to try simple analgesia at home, such as Panadol or anti-inflammatory treatment. If the pain persists or is severe you may need to speak to your local Doctor or visit Casualty to obtain adequate pain relief. At this point an Urologist will usually be contacted to arrange further treatment as necessary.