

CAN I DISSOLVE MY STONE

Patients often ask about the possibility of dissolving their stone. Realistically, only a small number of stones can be dissolved, essentially those composed of uric acid, which make up about 10 or 15% of stones. Raising the pH of the urine by taking sodium bicarbonate and increasing fluid intake can help smaller uric acid stones dissolve. Treatment usually takes several weeks and requires repeat imaging to ensure the stone has disappeared.

Patients also ask “how much **water** do I need to drink?”. Various guidelines suggest 2-3 litres each day. Other guidelines concentrate on how much urine you should produce. There is really no set amount of fluid intake to prevent stones from forming but as long as the urine remains clear i.e. not concentrated, fluid intake is probably sufficient. I explain to patients that they should judge their fluid intake by the colour of their urine, trying to keep the urine a pale lemon colour. Remember though, that drinking extra fluid obviously increases urinary frequency, including at night. In recurrent stone formers, it is probably important to have extra hydration during the night to keep the urine dilute even when asleep. Having a glass of water when you wake up to void is a reasonable idea. Water is considered the best fluid to consume. Coffee and tea should be limited in stone formers.