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## CREW HEALTH ADVICE

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# Crew Health Advice: Kidney Stones

The Club claims teams regularly see cases of kidney stones in crew onboard. A recent case presented to the Club resulted in the crewmember being hospitalised in South America for surgery. Despite the best efforts of physicians the kidney stones could not be removed. The crewmember was provided pain relief and repatriated for follow up treatment. The case, which evolved over a few months, reached costs of USD 35000 and resulted in some disruption to the ship's schedule.

**The Club has discussed kidney stones with Crew Health partner Liz Baugh of Red Square Medical.**

### Where are your kidneys located?

Your kidneys are located in the abdominal cavity around the back on the left and right hand side.

### What do they do?

Kidneys are a filtration unit. They filter the blood for waste products, extract excess fluid and the combination of those gives us urine which is then passed down through the ureters into the bladder before being passed out of the body via the urethra.

### What are kidney stones?

Kidney stones are collections of waste products found in the blood that form little crystals. They can affect one or both kidneys and can be so tiny that you have no symptoms and pee them out without noticing. Sometimes though, the crystals that form kidney stones can build up and form larger lumps.

### Why do they form in the first place and what can I do to prevent them?

The main reason seafarers develop Kidney Stones is because they are not drinking enough fluids, but it can also be down to medication or undiagnosed medical conditions.

To prevent them from affecting you, make sure you drink plenty of fluids – especially

when you are working in hot and humid environments.

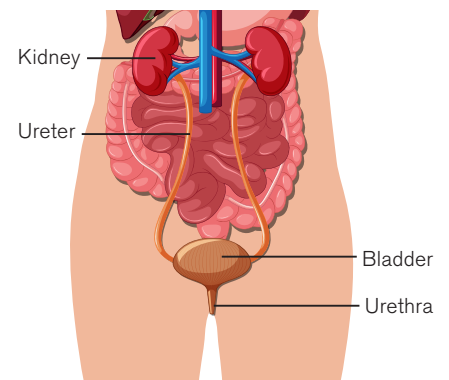
Next time you have your pre-sea medical ask your Doctor to check through your medications and see if they are likely to increase your risk of getting Kidney Stones.

Always report your symptoms, no matter how minor they seem to be, it is better to get checked out then wait for it to get worse because when Kidney Stones are bad they are excruciating and will usually end up in you having to be medically evacuated from the vessel.

### How do I know if I have Kidney Stones?

The very tiny ones you won't know about, but once the crystals start building up and forming larger lumps there are some definite signs and symptoms to look out for:

- Pain that may start around the back where your kidneys are located that moves around the side and down towards your groin area. This could be on one or both sides.
- Pain that is severe and comes and goes and feels spasmodic.
- Blood in your urine
- The feeling of needing to pee often but when you do it is painful and only small amounts of urine are passed.
- Nausea and possibly vomiting
- An elevated temperature



### What should I do if I think I have Kidney Stones?

- Report to the person onboard who is in charge of medical care and tell them about your symptoms.
- Drink plenty of water.

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This advice was compiled in collaboration with Red Square Medical, who offer a full range of maritime medical services, from training and consultancy services, right through to mass casualty incident planning and training.

[www.redsquaremedical.com](http://www.redsquaremedical.com)

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The Club was the first to launch a crew health scheme in 1996 due to increasing crew illness claims and a lack of accountability of clinics. Since 1996, the Crew Health programme has become one of the Club's leading loss prevention initiatives. The aim of the programme is to reduce the volume and value of crew illness claims which are caused by a pre-existing illnesses or disease. These underlying conditions often impact on the crew member's fitness for service and can endanger not only the health of the seafarer but also the onboard safety of other crew.

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Sophia joined Thomas Miller in 1992 and from 1994 worked as a claims handler dealing mainly with French and Spanish Members. In 2004, Sophia became the Crew Health Programme Director. Sophia has undertaken a large number of clinic audits, implemented the standard medical

form and clinic guidelines. She has also lead the scheme through the largest period of growth and development with a doubling of approved clinic facilities and a four fold member increase. Sophia is a Director of Thomas Miller & Co. Ltd.

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Saidul Alom joined Crew Health from the European Region Service Team in 2004. Saidul provides administrative support to the Crew Health programme and is responsible for liaison with the approved clinics on financial billing matters and ensuring prompt payment of all clinic fees.

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### **Stuart Last**

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Stuart joined Thomas Miller in 1998 as a claims trainee for UK P&I Club's Greek Members. In April 2005 Stuart joined Crew Health as the Team Administrator. Stuart is responsible for co-ordination of Member entries and administration for the clinic approval process.