

A PATIENT GUIDE TO

Having a Ureteral Stent

Your questions answered.



What is a ureteral stent?

A **ureteral stent** is a specially designed hollow tube placed in the ureter (the tube that carries urine from your kidney to your bladder).

Made of flexible plastic material, the length of an adult stent is typically 22 to 30 centimeters long, extending from the kidney to the bladder, with a coil on each end to hold the stent in place.

The purpose of the stent is to create a channel to help urine pass down the ureter. It helps reduce your risk of serious complications, such as blockage of the ureter from swelling, a stone or a blood clot. It can help the ureter heal after surgery reducing the risk of future complications. It will occasionally be placed to help passage of small stone fragments following surgery.

Typically, at the end of your kidney stone surgery, the doctor places a stent using a scope or X-ray. The doctor may leave a string attached to the stent to aid in its removal following surgery. You will likely notice the string hanging out of your urethra.

The doctor may tape the string to your leg or lower belly. If you have a string following surgery, take care to try and not pull on or snag the string since this can lead to dislodgement or movement of the stent.

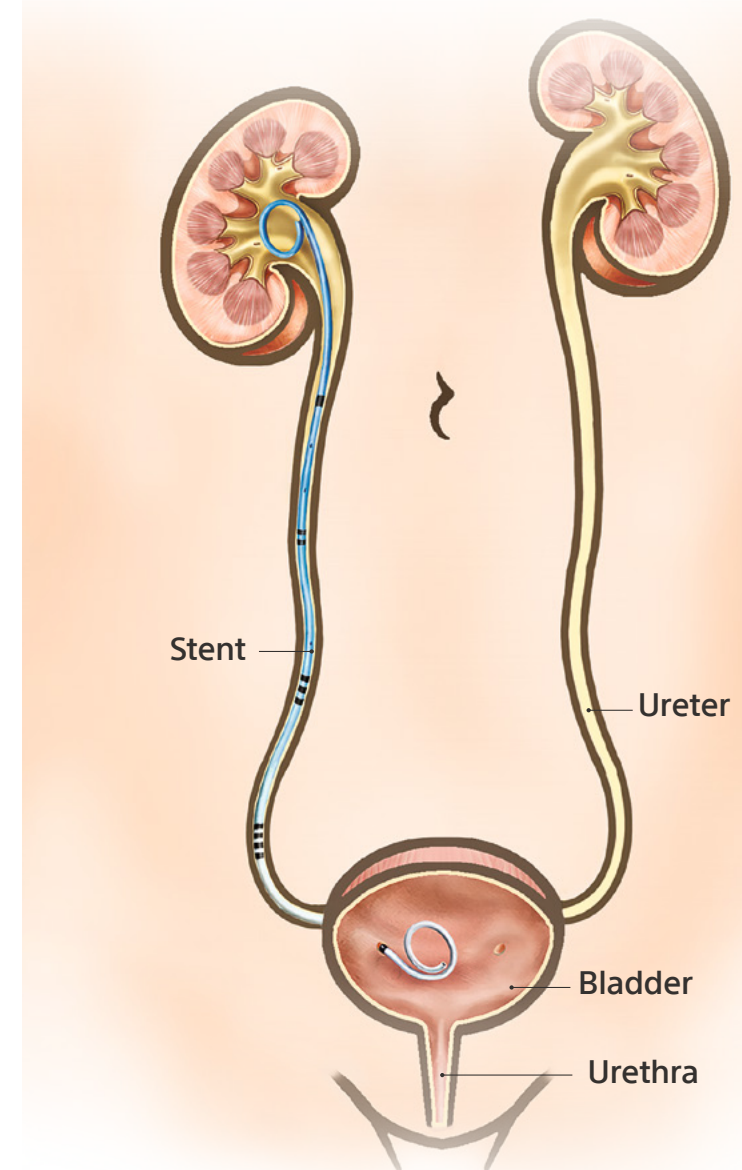


FIGURE 1: Ureteral Stent

How long will the stent stay in the body?

Typically, a stent remains in place 4 to 7 days following surgery. Sometimes a stent must stay in longer. It is also sometimes placed before your surgery to treat obstruction from a stone or stricture, help treatment of an infection, or help dilate a narrow ureter.

Can a stent get displaced?

A stent does not typically fall out. However, if your stent gets dislodged, you may experience constant urinary incontinence (requiring a pad for protection). Though not life threatening, contact your doctor or go to the emergency room for evaluation. Very rarely, a stent can migrate and require removal or re-positioning.

How is a stent removed?

Your doctor or nurse removes a stent during a short office procedure:

- For stents without strings, the doctor places a numbing gel in your urethra (the tube that allows urine to pass out of your body). Using a scope, the doctor grasps the stent coil in the bladder and gently pulls it out through the urethra.
- If your doctor left a string on the stent, a doctor or nurse removes it by gently pulling the string and stent out of the body. It is possible for a patient to remove the stent on his or her own. Your doctor will inform you when and how to remove the stent.

What are the possible side effects of stents?

The design of ureteral stents allows people to live as normally as possible. However, don't be alarmed if you feel the stent when you move around. This is common. For example, you may feel the stent as you shift from sitting to standing or when you do physical activities. Most side effects do not pose danger to your health or your kidneys.

Side effects may include:

Discomfort and pain:

- Usually experienced as a dull feeling in the flank and groin region
- Pain or flank pressure while urinating caused by increased pressure in the kidney as the bladder contracts and urine flows up the stent

Urinary tract symptoms:

- Blood in the urine is very normal with stents. Drinking fluids helps to reduce blood clots from forming in your urine.
- A burning sensation during urination or when you move
- Bladder muscle spasms (pelvic cramping sensation)

Urinary incontinence symptoms:

- Urgency (got to go now) and frequency (constant need to urinate)
- Leakage of urine due to the inability to make it to a toilet in time
- Feeling of not completely emptying your bladder

Nausea and occasional vomiting:

- Symptoms typically improve after one to two days but may persist until the stent comes out. To relieve these symptoms, take medicines as prescribed by your physician. Let your doctor know if the stent causes significant problems.

Can the side effects interfere with my day-to-day life?

The side effects of a stent may disrupt your normal activities for several days. After that, the side effects usually decrease and most patients resume normal activities. However, during this time, it helps to have easy access to a restroom.

Physical activity and sports

You can be physically active while the stent is in place. However, you may experience some discomfort in the belly and back, as well as passing of blood in your urine with exercise. Consider abstaining from vigorous activity if your urine becomes too bloody or pain is not controllable with medicines.

Work activities

You can continue to work normally with the stent inside your body. If your work involves a lot of physical activities, you may experience more discomfort. Occasionally side effects of the stent, such as urinary symptoms and pain, may make you feel tired.

Social life

The presence of a stent does not usually affect social life. If you experience urinary symptoms such as frequency and urgency, you may need to use the toilet more frequently.

Sex

If your doctor left a string taped to your body or dangling from your urethra, do not have sexual activity—if you do, the stent may get dislodged. If there is no string, there are no restrictions on sexual activity; however, sexual activity could increase stent discomfort.

Travel

It is possible to travel with a stent in place; however, check with your doctor first. Make sure that your underlying kidney condition and general health allow for travel.

Is there increased risk of urinary infections?

A stent does not necessarily increase your risk of infection. It may actually decrease your risk of infection by allowing urine to pass out of your body.

If you get a urine dip test done while the stent is in, however, the results may suggest infection and blood may be present. This is normal and should be treated by your physician based on your symptoms and/or test results.

What care do I need to take?

Follow your doctor's post-surgery instructions. Also, remember to:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Take pain medicines and other prescribed medicines for relief of stent and surgery discomfort

When should I call my doctor?

Call if you:

- Have a temperature greater than 100°F or 37.8°C or chills
- Find that pain medicine is not reducing your pain
- Cannot tolerate food or fluids
- Have excessive blood in the urine, which looks like ketchup (red, thick and solid—you cannot see through the blood)
- Have blood clots in your urine. Clots may make it difficult to urinate. Contact your doctor right away if you are having difficulty urinating or emptying your bladder.

Some blood in the urine is normal after this type of procedure. Urine colors can range from light pink to reddish and can even have a brownish hue, but you can typically see through it. Medicines to help with the burning sensation can turn the urine an orange or blue color.



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