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'100 out of 10 pain': the common summer health scourge

By Katelyn Catanzariti

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Young, healthy and 24, Tina Brock didn't know what had hit her when crippling pain rippled through her body, leaving her nauseous and aching.

The discomfort was excruciating and came from nowhere, but the medics at her university campus quickly recognised the symptoms of kidney stones.

"Doctors will sometimes say kidney stones rarely kill you - they just make you want to die because you want the pain to go away," Ms Brock, now 58, told AAP.

"It hurts so bad you think it must be something that's going to kill you."

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📷 Tina Brock says kidney stones hurt so bad "you think it must be something that's going to kill you". (James Ross/AAP PHOTOS)

Ms Brock, whose father also had kidney stones, has now suffered with the condition on and off for decades and has endured five surgeries despite taking every precaution and moderating her diet and exercise.

Her experience is a warning as Australia heads into what is forecast to be a hotter-than-normal summer - conditions that put thousands at a higher risk of developing the painful condition.

With temperatures rising, the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is urging people to stay hydrated as stone cases begin to spike from December.

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The organisation says hotter climates, such as those in the Northern Territory and Queensland, consistently record the highest rates.

Up to 10 per cent of the population might be affected, with men historically more prone to developing stones - although the gap between the genders is narrowing.



📷 Tina Brock has suffered from kidney stones on and off for decades, enduring five surgeries. (PR IMAGE PHOTO)

Hospitalisation is common and the condition often mimics other emergencies, with patients turning up in distress convinced they're facing appendicitis, cardiac pain or another serious health event.

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"Patients often describe the pain as '100 out of 10'," urologist Gregory Jack said.

"It's sudden, severe and unlike anything they've experienced before, and even small stones can cause extreme discomfort."

Kidney stones form when minerals and salts in urine crystallise and grow, a process that can take years.

Often, there are no symptoms until the stone moves out of the kidney and into the urinary tract.

The main causes of kidney stones include dehydration and high salt intake.



📷 Urologist Gregory Jack says the pain caused by kidney stones is sudden and severe. (Diego Fedeles/AAP PHOTOS)

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Hot, humid weather increases the risk, as does a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, diabetes, bowel surgery, metabolic syndrome and family history.

Experts highlight the need to stay well-hydrated, particularly during the hot summer months.

Stones can take from days to months to pass. While smaller ones might move on their own, larger stones can require endoscopic surgery or non-invasive ultrasound treatments that help break them apart.

Some people tout home remedies – such as drinking lemon drinks – to help the stones pass, but Dr Jack said it was difficult to substantiate their efficacy.

"Everyone's got their anecdotes, but 80 per cent of these stones will pass on their own," he said.

Australian Associated Press

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BROOKS, Gladys Marjorie (Ma).
On Saturday 8 September 2020, peacefully with family at Golden Pond Rest Home, Whakatane, NZ, aged 105 years.
Dearly loved wife of the late Edward and Allan; Mother of the late Norman and Pauline (Paul); Grandmother to Dennis, Kim, Cheryl, Joy, Colin, Paul, Timothy, Patrick, Tessa and Eric (late John); Great Grandmother and great great Grandmother to many.
In accordance with family wishes, a private cremation has been held. A private memorial service will be held in Australia at a later date.
Communications to the Brooks family, C/- PO Box 2070, Whakatane 3108, New Zealand or online at willettsfunerals.co.nz

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