

## Urinary Tract Infections

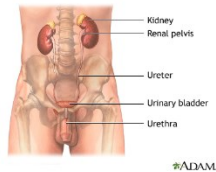
Urinary tract infections (UTIs) happen when a group of bacteria enter any part of the urinary system, that is, the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. Women are more likely to get UTIs because their urethra is shorter and closer to the anus than in men's bodies. Also, for this reason, they are more likely to get a UTI after having sex, using a diaphragm for birth control, or once they go through menopause because the drop in estrogen causes changes in the urinary tract. These types of infections are not contagious and most of the time, with proper medical treatment, the body can rid itself of these bacteria. Urinary tract infections can be uncomfortable or painful, but they are very common and easy to treat.

***Depending on where the infection develops, it will have a different name:***

- Bladder - This is called cystitis or bladder infection.
- Kidneys - This is called pyelonephritis or kidney infection.
- Urethra – It is the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside. It is called urethritis.
- Ureters - These are the tubes that carry urine from each kidney to the bladder. They are rarely an area where the infection develops.

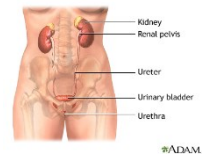
***The following factors can increase the chance of infection:***

- Diabetes
- Difficulty emptying completely the bladder
- Have a catheter to drain and collect urine
- Bowel incontinence
- Enlarged prostate, narrow urethra, or any other factor that blocks the flow of urine
- Kidney stones
- Being elderly or suffering from a disease that affects personal care habits (Alzheimer's, delusions, addictions)
- Being bedridden or having limited mobility for a long period of time
- Pregnancy
- Surgery or other procedure on the urinary tract



***Symptoms of an infection are:***

- Pain or burning when urinating
- Frequent need to urinate
- Cloudy, bloody, or foul-smelling urine
- Fever
- Pressure or cramps in the lower abdomen or lower back



***If the infection spreads to the kidneys, you may experience the following symptoms:***

- Chills, shaking, or night sweats
- Fatigue and feeling unwell
- Fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C)
- Pain in the side, back or groin
- Red or hot skin
- Confusion
- Nausea and vomiting
- Severe abdominal pain

To establish a diagnosis, urine and blood tests are performed. If there is suspicion of greater damage, CT scans, ultrasounds or other specialized studies may be required. Treatment for urinary tract infections will depend on where it develops. Antibiotics are usually used to stop the spread of the infection and depending on the severity of this will be the extension of days (from 3 to 14), under medication.

Also, if you have pelvic pain or discomfort, you may be prescribed pain management or anti-inflammatory medications. Once the antibiotic treatment has finished, your doctor will probably repeat the urine tests to make sure there is no longer an infection.

***If the infection is not treated in time, there may be complications:***

- Infection of the blood (sepsis) - the risk is higher for young people, older adults, and people whose bodies cannot fight infections (because of HIV or chemotherapy for cancer).
- Kidney scarring or damage.
- Kidney infection.

***Other recommendations to manage the infection are:***

- Abundant consumption of water during and after treatment.
- Consume cranberries (cranberries) or their juice.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages such as coffee, soft drinks, and teas.

If you receive medical treatment for your urinary tract infection, you should be symptom-free within a week. A person with a more serious urinary tract infection may require hospital treatment to receive injected or intravenous antibiotics.

***What can be done to prevent urinary tract infections?***

- If you are a woman, once you have urinated, you should wipe yourself with toilet paper from front to back. This will prevent bacteria's from the anus from entering the urethra.
- Do not resist the urge to urinate.
- Avoid exposing the genital area to moisture.
- It is convenient to use cotton underwear.
- Be aware of the ingredients in soaps for the genital area.

- Urinate before having sex. Once finished, wash the genital area.
- Stay well hydrated by drinking water to keep your bladder free of bacteria.

**Social and Emotional Aspect:**

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns regarding your diagnosis, you can talk to your primary care physician or contact the following phone line:

Customer Service Department  
1-844-347-7800  
TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7805

Visit our website  
[www.firstmedicalvital.com](http://www.firstmedicalvital.com)

**References:**

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