

URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)

What is a Urinary Tract Infection?

The urinary tract is the system in the body that makes urine and carries it out of the body. It includes your bladder and kidneys and the tubes that connect them. When bacteria or germs get into this system, they can cause an infection. Most UTIs are bladder infections (cystitis). A bladder infection is usually not serious if it is treated right away. If the bladder infection is not taken care of, it can spread to the kidneys. A kidney infection (nephritis) is serious and can cause permanent damage to the kidneys or lead to sepsis.

How does someone get a UTI?

Bacteria that enter the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body) and travel up to the kidneys and bladder are the usual cause of UTIs. Bacteria that normally live in the large intestine and are present in feces (stool) are the most common cause of these infections. Sexual intercourse or personal care by others may also introduce bacteria into the urethra. Catheters, which are small, flexible tubes inserted into the bladder to allow urine to drain are also a common way that bacteria are introduced into the bladder. Sometimes, bacteria traveling through the blood or lymph system can cause UTIs. Kidney stones or an enlarged prostate in men, and problems with how the urinary tract works can cause UTIs by limiting the body's ability to empty the bladder completely.

What are the symptoms of a UTI?

- Pain or burning when urinating
- Urge to urinate frequently but only passing a small amount of urine
- Dribbling (inability to control the release of urine)
- Pain or a feeling of heaviness in the lower abdomen
- Reddish or pinkish urine
- Foul-smelling urine
- Cloudy urine
- Pain in the back, just below the rib cage, on one side of the body
- Fever and chills, flu-like symptoms
- Nausea and vomiting

What should I do if I notice these symptoms?

- Contact the person's HCP immediately so that a test can be done on the urine to see if there is an infection and antibiotics can be prescribed
- Finish antibiotics.
- Do a follow-up check on the urine after the person has completed the course of antibiotics to make sure it is gone
- Drink or offer lots of water
- Avoid caffeine and soda
- Try drinking or offering cranberry juice

How can I prevent UTIs?

- Drink or offer lots of fluids
- Urinate often. Do not try to hold it.
- Maintain careful catheter care and keep catheter and bag lower than the bladder at all times to prevent urine from going back into the bladder
- Women should always wipe front to back after urination or a bowel movement
- If someone wears briefs for incontinence, change them often and quickly after a BM as that can be an easy way for bacteria to enter the urethra
- Avoid constipation as it can put pressure on the bladder and irritate it
- Women should urinate immediately after intercourse