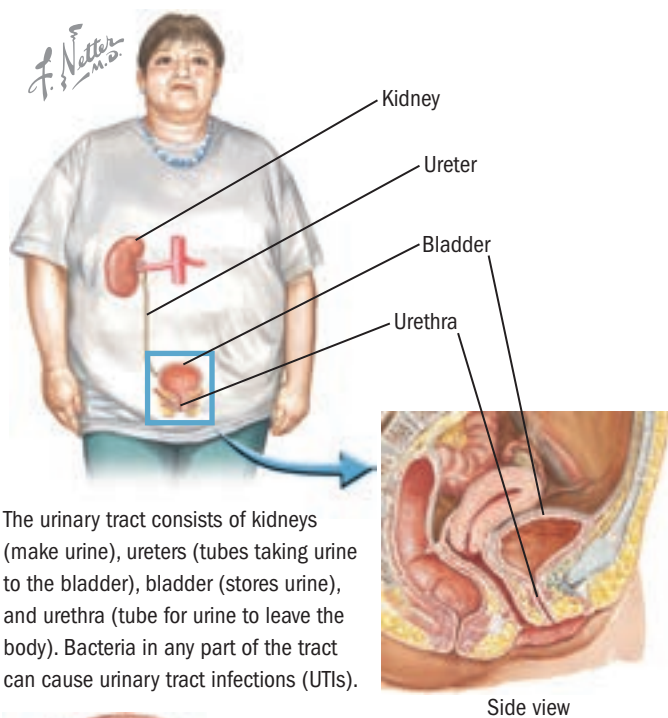


MANAGING YOUR URINARY TRACT INFECTION



The urinary tract consists of kidneys (make urine), ureters (tubes taking urine to the bladder), bladder (stores urine), and urethra (tube for urine to leave the body). Bacteria in any part of the tract can cause urinary tract infections (UTIs).



Kidney stones

UTIs can start because of kidney stones, catheters, or bacteria on genital or anal skin that get inside the body because of wiping the wrong way after going to the toilet or because of sex. Women have a shorter urethra than men, so it's easier for women to get UTIs.

Symptoms include needing to urinate often, painful urination, urinating only small amounts, cloudy or foul-smelling urine, and blood or pus in urine.



Cloudy urine

To confirm that you have a UTI, your health care provider will test a urine sample.

What Are Urinary Tract Infections?

The urinary tract consists of organs that make, store, and get rid of urine: kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra.

Kidneys make urine. Urine then flows in tubes called ureters to the bladder. From the bladder, urine leaves the body through the urethra. Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are bacterial infections in any part of this tract.

What Causes UTIs?

The most common cause is a kind of bacteria named *Escherichia coli*, which is found in the intestines. Bacteria on the skin or near the anus can get into the urinary tract and move up. Women have a shorter urethra than men, so they get UTIs more often.

Bacteria also get into the tract through catheters (tubes) used during medical treatment, when stones or congenital abnormalities block the tract, or after vigorous sex. UTIs can also occur when another infection travels to the kidneys.

UTIs aren't usually contagious, but sex can be painful during an infection and should be avoided.

What Are the Symptoms of UTIs?

Symptoms include feeling the need to urinate often, painful urination, urinating only small amounts of urine, no control of the urine flow, cloudy or foul-smelling urine, and blood or pus in urine.

If the kidneys are infected, fever and back pain may occur.

How Are UTIs Diagnosed?

The health care provider may want to test the urine (urinalysis and urine culture). A clean-catch urine sample is needed. To get this sample, special cleaning methods are used and urination is started, stopped, and started again. If you have recurrent or persistent infections, your health care provider may order additional tests to determine if your urinary tract is normal.

How Are UTIs Treated?

Antibiotics are usually needed for 3 to 10 days. Fluid intake should be increased to help flush the urinary tract. Caffeine and alcohol should be avoided. The health care provider may prescribe medicine such as phenazopyridine to relieve pain when urinating. This drug will turn urine orange. Over-the-counter pain relievers (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) may also help. Sitz baths may ease discomfort. Rest until fever and pain are gone.

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A UTI usually clears up in 3 to 10 days with antibiotics. Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water daily can help flush out your urinary tract. Drinking cranberry or prune juice can also help prevent UTIs by making urine more acid.



Use good hygiene. Women should wipe from front to back after using the toilet. Try to urinate often and empty your bladder completely.

If you use a diaphragm, consider switching to birth control pills to reduce risk of future UTIs. Discuss options with your health care provider.



Avoid alcohol and caffeine until your infection clears up—these drinks irritate the urinary system.

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No special diet is needed, but drinking juices (cranberry or prune juice) to make urine more acid may help, as can taking vitamin C; however, their efficacy is unknown and unproven. If you have frequent UTIs, your health care provider may order additional tests such as sonogram of kidneys and bladder. If a structural problem is found, surgical correction may be necessary.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing UTIs:

- ✓ **DO** drink 6 to 8 glasses of water daily. Drinking water and cranberry juice may help the treatment of UTIs.
- ✓ **DO** use good hygiene. Women should wipe from front to back after using the toilet. Avoid douches and sprays (increase chances of getting UTIs). Showers may be better than baths. Wear cotton underwear and avoid tight pants.
- ✓ **DO** lower the risk of UTIs. Women can urinate just before and just after sex. Avoid using a diaphragm or spermicide.
- ✓ **DO** try to urinate often and empty your bladder completely.
- ✓ **DO** tell your health care provider if you take birth control pills. Some antibiotics interfere with birth control pills.
- ✓ **DO** take antibiotics until they're gone. If you get UTIs often, your health care provider may give you antibiotics to prevent them.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your fever continues after 48 hours of antibiotic therapy or symptoms return after you finish your antibiotics.
- ⊘ **DON'T** skip doses or stop taking antibiotics before they're gone.
- ⊘ **DON'T** have sex until fever and symptoms stop.
- ⊘ **DON'T** hold your urine for long periods.
- ⊘ **DON'T** drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

• American Academy of Family Physicians
Tel: (800) 274-2237

Website: <http://www.familydoctor.org>

• American Urological Association
Tel: (866) 746-4282

Website: <http://www.urologyhealth.org>

• National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse
Tel: (800) 891-5390

Website: <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov>