

Catheter-associated Urinary Tract Infection (CAUTI) Basics

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KEY POINTS

- A catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) occurs when germs enter the urinary tract through a urinary catheter and cause infection.
- CAUTIs are one of the most common types of healthcare-associated infections (HAIs).
- They are preventable and treatable.

Overview

A catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) occurs when germs enter the urinary tract through a urinary catheter and cause infection. They are one of the most common types of [HAIs](#) but are preventable and treatable.

Signs and symptoms

- Burning or pain below the stomach
- Fever
- Burning while peeing
- Peeing more frequently than usual

Risk factors

The most important risk factor for developing a CAUTI is prolonged use of a urinary catheter.

Causes

A CAUTI occurs when germs (usually bacteria) enter the body through a urinary catheter and cause infection. The infection can happen in any part of the urinary tract (e.g., kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra).

Reducing risk

Patients

Should

- Understand why they need it and frequently ask healthcare providers if the catheter is still needed.
- If the patient has a long-term catheter, they must clean their hands before and after touching the catheter.
- Check the position of the urine bag; it should always be below the level of the bladder.

Should not

- Tug or pull on the tubing.
- Twist or kink the catheter tubing.

Healthcare facilities

Healthcare workers and facilities can prevent CAUTIs and protect patients with proper infection control processes.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Clinical Safety: Preventing Catheter-associated Urinary Tract Infections (CAUTIs)

Quick facts

- CAUTIs are one of the most common HAIs.
- About 75% of UTIs developed in hospitals are associated with a urinary catheter.
- 15-25% of hospitalized patients use urinary catheters.
- CAUTIs are associated with increased morbidity, mortality, healthcare costs, and length of stay.

Types of catheters

- **Indwelling urinary catheter.** A drainage tube is inserted into the bladder through the urethra, left in place and connected to a closed collection system.
- **Intermittent ("in-and-out") catheterization.** Brief insertion of a catheter into the bladder through the urethra to drain urine followed by removal.
- **External catheter.** A urine containment device is attached to a urinary drainage bag that fits over or adheres to the genitalia. The most used external catheter is a soft flexible sheath that fits over the penis ("condom" catheter).
- **Suprapubic catheter.** Surgically inserted into the bladder through an incision in the lower abdomen.

Treatment and recovery

Most CAUTIs can be treated with antibiotics and/or removal or change of the catheter. The healthcare provider will determine the best treatment for each patient.

What CDC is doing

- Tracking CAUTIs through the [National Healthcare Safety Network](#).
 - Data is also available on the [AR & Patient Safety Portal](#).
- Working closely with [health departments](#), other federal agencies, healthcare providers and patients to prevent infections caused by CAUTIs and [slow the spread of resistant germs](#).

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)