

What is a UTI?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) occurs when bacteria grow in the urinary tract.

UTIs are the second most common type of infection that can occur in the body and are usually caused by bacteria that enters the body via the urethra.

UTIs are among the most common infections in the elderly and those with an intellectual disability, but the symptoms may be a little different. Symptoms can include lethargy, falling, incontinence, increased appetite, and decreased mobility. Additional symptoms can include agitation, delirium (sudden severe confusion, sometimes including hallucinations and hyperactivity) and other behavioral changes.

These groups are also more likely to develop serious complications as a result of UTIs.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Organs that can be infected include:

- ◆ Kidneys – Collect waste from blood to make urine.
- ◆ Ureters – Move urine from the kidneys to the bladder.
- ◆ Bladder (common) – Stores urine.
- ◆ Urethra (common) – The tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body.

Women get UTIs more often than men.

Women have a shorter urethra than a man does, which shortens the distance that bacteria must travel to reach the bladder.

What are signs of a UTI?

- ◆ Frequent urge to urinate, but not much urine comes out.
- ◆ Burning, stinging or pain with urination.
- ◆ Urine that smells bad or looks dark, cloudy, or red.
- ◆ Pain or pressure in the lower back or sides.
- ◆ Tiredness, fever, and chills.
- ◆ Heavy feeling in the lower belly.
- ◆ Pelvic pain in women, rectal pain in men.
- ◆ Waking in the night to urinate.
- ◆ Feeling generally unwell.
- ◆ New onset or worsening of pre-existing confusion / agitation.



UTIs cannot be spread between people.

You are at higher risk if you have:



- ◆ Diabetes.
- ◆ Constipation.
- ◆ Dementia.
- ◆ Kidney stones or any other condition that obstructs or blocks your urinary tract.
- ◆ A weakened immune system eg. from chemotherapy or HIV.
- ◆ A urinary catheter which is a tube inserted into your bladder to drain away the urine.
- ◆ Obesity.
- ◆ Pregnant women are at increased risk for kidney infections.
- ◆ Some women develop urinary symptoms after sex because of bacteria entering the urethra.
- ◆ After menopause, women are more likely to suffer from bladder infections because low estrogen levels.
- ◆ Men are much less likely to suffer from UTIs, but infection can occur if an enlarged prostate gland interferes with urination.

How is it treated?

UTIs are treated and cured with antibiotics.

Always finish antibiotic treatment. If treated quickly, UTIs usually do not cause serious problems. You may need longer treatment or a different antibiotic if you:

- ◆ Are pregnant.
- ◆ Have frequent UTIs.
- ◆ Have diabetes.
- ◆ Have a UTI that has spread to your kidneys.

UTIs in the bladder and urethra that are not treated can spread to the kidneys and cause serious illness.

If you have a UTI:

- ◆ Always finish antibiotic treatment.
- ◆ Return to your health care provider if:
 - Signs don't go away.
 - Signs come back.
 - Signs get worse.
 - You have more or different signs of UTI.

Some doctors suggest showers instead of baths, and sanitary pads instead of tampons.

How can you avoid UTIs?

- ◆ Urinate when you have the urge.
- ◆ Don't hold in urine for a long time.
- ◆ Urinate before and after having sex.
- ◆ Drink 6-8 glasses of water daily.
- ◆ Clean your genital area every day.
- ◆ Women wipe from front to back.
- ◆ Avoid the use of douches and perfumed sprays for the genital area.
- ◆ Change pads frequently.
- ◆ If possible shower rather than bathe.
- ◆ Daily cranberry juice or cranberry extract capsules, as well as probiotic supplements, are being studied to determine their role in preventing chronic UTIs.

What about pregnancy?

It is important to notify your health care provider right away if you are pregnant and think you may have a UTI.

In pregnant women, UTIs:

- ◆ May result in early labor or early birth.
- ◆ May cause harm to the baby, or even death.
- ◆ Are more likely to spread to the kidneys.

For more on UTIs see:

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK/NIH):

Urinary Tract Infections in Adults

www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/utiadult/

U.S. National Library of Medicine:

Urinary tract infection – adults

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000521.htm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Women's Health:

Urinary tract infection fact sheet

www.womenshealth.gov/faq/urinary-tract-infection.cfm

Urinary System Diagram

