



Frequently Asked Questions about Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)



“It was a normal day at work, but I was tired and felt like I had to pee the whole day. But when I went to the bathroom, not much came out. When I did pee, it burned and smelled bad-- and looked cloudy too. I called my doctor, and she said it sounded like a urinary tract infection or UTI. So, I went to her office, and she asked me to pee in a cup. She tested it. It was a UTI. She called my drug store and ordered pills for me to take. I took the pills for a week, and then it was gone.”

What is a urinary (yoor-ih-nehr-ee) tract infection (UTI)?

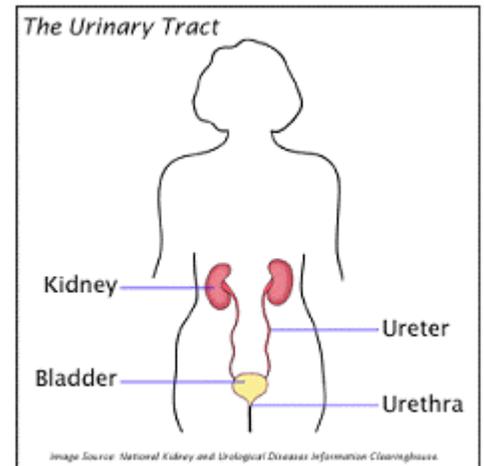
The urinary tract makes and stores urine (pee). A urinary tract infection(UTI) is caused by bacteria

(bak-teer-ee-uh) that gets into your urinary tract. A UTI can happen in parts of your urinary tract, like your kidneys, bladder, or urethra (yuh-ree-thra).

What causes UTIs?

Many things cause UTIs:

- Bacteria in your bowel movements (BM) or poop. Sometimes, after you have a BM, the bacteria in it can get into your urinary tract.
- Having vaginal sex. Bacteria are pushed into the bladder.
- Using certain types of birth control, like a diaphragm or spermicide (a cream, foam, or gel used to kill sperm).
- Anything that blocks the flow of urine, like a kidney stone (a stone that forms from crystals in urine. It builds up in your kidneys or in other areas).
- Having diabetes, which makes it harder for your body to fight other health problems.
- Having a tube in your bladder to help you pass urine (also called a catheter [ka-theh-ter]). The tube can get bacteria in it.
- Losing estrogen and changes in your vagina after menopause put you more at risk.



What are the signs of a UTI?

If you have a UTI, you may have some of these signs:

- You have an urge to pass urine a lot, but you can go only a little bit at a time.
- It hurts or stings when you pass urine.
- Your urine smells bad.
- Your urine looks milky or cloudy.
- Your urine looks reddish (blood is in there).
- You feel pressure in your lower belly.
- You are tired or shaky.
- You have a fever.

How does a doctor figure out I have a UTI?

To find out if you have a UTI, your doctor will ask you to go into the bathroom and pass urine in a plastic cup. Before you do this, your doctor will give you a special tissue to wipe your vagina first. After that, urinate a little bit into the toilet and then into the cup.



How is a UTI treated?



UTIs are treated with antibiotics (an-ty-by-ah-tiks), a medicine that kills bacteria. Your doctor will tell you how long you need to take the medicine. Make sure you take all of your medicine, even if you feel better!

If you don't take medicine for a UTI, the UTI can hurt other parts of your body. Also, if you're pregnant and have signs of a UTI, see your doctor right away. A UTI could cause problems in your pregnancy, such as having your baby too early and getting high blood pressure.

Are there steps I can take to prevent a UTI?

- Urinate when you have to. Don't hold it.
- After you urinate or have a BM (poop), wipe your genital area from front to back.
- Drink a lot of water every day.
- Drink cranberry juice.
- Clean your vagina and anus each day.

- Urinate before and after sex.
- Take showers, not baths.
- Don't use douches or feminine hygiene sprays.
- Wear panties with a cotton crotch.
- Drink water after sex.
- Use condoms or lubricants that don't have spermicide.
- See your doctor as soon as you have signs of a UTI.

For more information...

For more information about urinary tract infections, contact the National Women's Health Information Center at (800) 994-WOMAN (9662) or TDD at 1-888-220-5446. Visit NWHIC's web site at www.4woman.gov.

National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse

Phone Number(s): (800) 891-5390

Internet Address: <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/kidney/nkudic.htm>

American Foundation for Urologic Disease

Phone Number(s): (800) 242-2383

Internet Address: <http://www.afud.org/>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Resource Center

Phone Number(s): (202) 638-5577 Resource Center

Internet Address: <http://www.acog.org/>

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