



Fact Sheet: Urinary Tract Infections

What is a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

- A UTI is an infection that affects part of the urinary tract
- When it affects the lower urinary tract, it is known as a **bladder infection (cystitis)**
- When it affects the upper urinary tract, it is known as **kidney infection (pyelonephritis)**
- UTI's are the second most common cause of infectious disease hospitalization in adults 65 years or older

Why are urinary tract infections more common in older men and woman?

- The immune system isn't as strong as when the person was younger
- A reduced ability to control urination and bowel movements increases the chance of getting bacteria into the urinary tract
- During hospital stays or when living in a long term care center, catheter use makes bladder infections more likely
- Problems with bladder dropping down out of its normal position (bladder prolapsed or cystocele) cause the bladder to not empty completely, making infections more likely
- In men, an enlarged prostate may result in partial blockage of urinary tract
- Other conditions, such as diabetes, lack of activity, poor hygiene or problems releasing urine increase risk
- Use of certain medications can cause difficulty with urination or a complete inability to urinate

Ways to prevent urinary tract infections or prevent their recurrence:

- Drink lots of water
- Keep the genital area clean
- If wearing adult diapers, see that they are changed regularly
- Wear cotton undergarments
- Always wipe from front to back (for women)

- Do not drink fluids that tend to irritate the bladder, such as alcohol and caffeine
- Drink cranberry juice or take cranberry supplements (if approved by healthcare provider, especially if taking Warfarin; and have no history of kidney stones)
- Do not use douches or other feminine hygiene products

Signs and symptoms of an infection:

- Signs of mental difficulties (confusion or delirium-like state, agitation, hallucinations, behavioral changes) in an elderly person
- Urine that appears cloudy
- Blood in urine
- Strong or foul smelling urine odor
- Frequent or urgent need to urinate
- Pain or burning without urination
- Pressure to pelvis
- Low grade fever
- Pain to flank area
- Dizziness or falling

How are urinary tract infections diagnosed?

- If someone has signs and symptoms of a UTI, the healthcare provider should be notified
- Urinalysis will be performed to check for white blood cells, red blood cells and bacteria; and to test chemicals such as nitrites in the urine
- Most infections can be diagnosed through urinalysis
- A urine culture can be done to identify the type of bacteria and to determine the best antibiotic treatment