

UMD Health Services
(218) 726-8155
Understanding Urinary Tract Infections

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

Q: WHAT ARE URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS?

A: Urinary tract infections (UTI's) occur when bacteria causes an infection in the bladder or kidneys. If the bladder is infected it is called cystitis, and if the kidneys are involved it is called pyelonephritis. Often the bacteria enters through the urethra, or opening to the bladder.

Q: WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

A: You may have one or more of the following signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection:

Pain / burning during urination	A need to get up during the night to urinate
Frequent urination	Fever and/or chills
Strong urge to urinate	Foul-smelling or cloudy urine
Only passing small amounts of urine	Blood in the urine
Uncomfortable feeling in lower abdomen	Low back pain or middle back pain
Urge to urinate even after bladder is empty	Nausea or vomiting

Q: WHY ARE WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO GET URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS?

A: UTI's are very common in sexually active women. The urethra in women is quite short and it is easy for bacteria to travel through the urethra into the bladder. The most common type of bacteria causing UTI's is E. Coli, the bacteria found in bowel movements.

Diaphragms (for birth control) and hormonal changes may lead to urinary tract infections in some women because of the way the urethra is affected.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR THERAPY

- 1) **Antibiotics:** Antibiotics kill or help remove the bacteria that cause the infection. Take as directed by your caregiver. Take the medicine for the full number of days it has been prescribed. Continue taking the medicine even after you start to feel better. Do not miss any doses.
- 2) **Extra Fluids:** It is important to drink at least 8 glasses of water each day, unless otherwise directed by your caregiver.
Avoid coffee, tea, carbonated beverages, and alcohol since these beverages irritate the bladder.
- 3) **Fever/Pain Relief:** You can use acetaminophen 325 mg (take two tablets) up to every 8 hours, or ibuprofen 200mg (take two tablets) up to every four hours for pain relief or fever. For bladder discomfort, your provider may prescribe Pyridium 200mg up to three times per day. This medication stains urine orange and MAY stain contact lenses the same color. It is also available over the counter as AZO-urine or uristat.
- 4) **Follow Up:** Call provider if any of these symptoms occur: rash, vomiting, nausea, severe diarrhea, or difficulty taking your medication. Call provider if not improving within 48 hours after starting treatment.

Q: HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS?

A: Once your urinary tract infection has been cleared up there are some things you can do to prevent getting future infections:

Practice good hygiene. Keep your genital area clean and dry. Avoid harsh soaps which can irritate the urethra.

Women should wipe from front to back after each bowel movement; this helps prevent bacteria from entering the urethra.

Try to drink 8 glasses of water each day unless otherwise directed by your caregiver.

Try to empty your bladder as soon as you have the urge to urinate or at least every 3-4 hours.

If you get very frequent UTI's, speak with your provider about other preventive measures.