

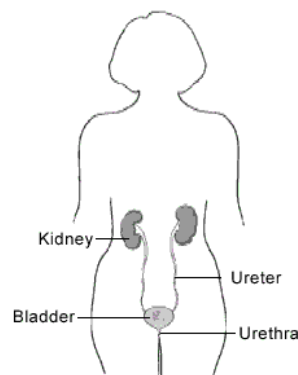
URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS: CAUSES, PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

WHAT IS A URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)?

Urinary Tract Infections are commonly abbreviated to as UTI. A UTI is an infection in the urinary tract. Infections are caused by microbes including fungi, viruses, and bacteria. Bacteria are the most common cause of UTIs. An infection in the urethra is called urethritis. A bladder infection is called cystitis. Bacteria may travel up the ureters to multiply and infect the kidneys. A kidney infection is called pyelonephritis.

The urinary tract is the body's drainage system for removing wastes and extra water. The urinary tract includes two kidneys, two ureters, a bladder, and a urethra. The kidneys are a pair of bean-shaped organs, each about the size of a fist and located below the ribs, one on each side of the spine, toward the middle of the back. Every minute, a person's kidneys filter about 3 liters, removing wastes and extra water.

The wastes and extra water make up the 1 to 2 liters of urine a person produces each day. The urine travels from the kidneys down two narrow tubes called the ureters. The urine is then stored in a balloon like organ called the bladder and emptied through the urethra, a tube at the bottom of the bladder.



CAUSE

Most UTIs are caused by bacteria that live in the bowel. The bacterium *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) cause the vast majority of UTIs and are found in stool.

1. Gender: Urinary tract infections occur more commonly in women than men, with half of women having an infection at some point in their life. Recurrences are common. Risk factors include sexual intercourse as well as family history. Women are more prone to UTIs than men because, in females, the urethra is much shorter and closer to the anus
2. As a women's estrogen levels decrease with menopause her risk of urinary tract infections increase due to the loss of protective vaginal flora
3. Urinary catheters
4. Diabetes
5. Males being uncircumcised
6. Large prostate gland in men over 50
7. Poor hygiene in children
8. Congenital deformities of the Urinary tract especially in children.
9. Pregnancy- Urinary Tract Infections are more common during Pregnancy.

Are UTIs serious?

YES (if not treated) some infections can lead to serious problems, such as kidney infections and even renal failure.

Chronic kidney infections (Infections that recur or last a long time) can cause permanent damage, including kidney scars, poor kidney function, high blood pressure, and other problems.

Some acute kidney infections (Infections that develop suddenly) can be life threatening, especially if the bacteria enter the bloodstream, a condition called septicemia.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

1. Frequency and intense urge to urinate
2. Burning sensation when urinating
3. Lower abdominal pain
4. Lower back pain
5. Pain in the flanks
6. Fever
7. Nausea and vomiting
8. Cloudy smelly urine and sometimes bloody urine
9. Passing only small amounts of urine despite a strong urge to urinate

UTI'S IN CHILDREN

In young children, the only symptom of a urinary tract infection (UTI) may be a fever. Because of the lack of more obvious symptoms, when females under the age of two or uncircumcised males less than a year exhibit a fever, loss of appetite, nausea, or vomiting a culture of the urine is recommended by many medical associations. Infants may feed poorly, vomit, sleep more, or show signs of jaundice. In older children, signs may include new onset urinary incontinence (loss of bladder control) and the child may tell the parent that they are feeling pain on urination.

DIAGNOSIS:

The doctor will ask you about the signs and symptoms and take a urine sample for microscopy (a quick lab test which looks for bacteria in the urine). It is a simple test available in most clinics in Kenya. Urine culture and sensitivity takes about 2 days and can be done to ascertain exactly which bacteria are causing the infection and are recommended for recurrent cases.

TREATMENT

Urinary tract infections can be managed at home and in combination with medical care.

MEDICAL

The doctor will give a course/dose of **antibiotics**.

In serious cases where the infection has gone to the kidneys, more aggressive treatment is required and one may be admitted.

Recurrent Infections in Women - Health care providers may advise women who have recurrent UTIs to try one of the following treatment options:

- Take low doses of the prescribed antibiotic daily for 6 months or longer. If taken at bedtime, the medication remains in the bladder longer and may be more effective. Scientific research has shown this therapy to be effective without causing serious side effects.
- Take a single dose of an antibiotic after sexual intercourse.
- Take a short course, 2 or 3 days of an antibiotic when symptoms appear

PREVENTION:

To try to prevent an infection, health care providers may suggest women

- drink plenty of water every day
- urinate when the need arises and avoid resisting the urge to urinate
- urinate after sexual intercourse
- switch to a different method of birth control if recurring UTIs are a problem
- Clean your hands before and after going to the toilet

Urination habits

A person should urinate often and when the urge arises. Bacteria can grow when urine stays in the bladder too long. Women and men should urinate shortly after sex to flush away bacteria that might have entered the urethra during sex. Drinking a glass of water will also help flush bacteria away.

After using the toilet, women should wipe from front to back. This step is most important after a bowel movement to keep bacteria from getting into the urethra.

Clothing

Cotton underwear and loose-fitting clothes should be worn, so air can keep the area around the urethra dry. Tight-fitting jeans and nylon underwear should be avoided because they can trap moisture and help bacteria grow.

Birth Control

For women, using a diaphragm or spermicide for birth control can lead to UTIs by increasing bacteria growth. A woman who has trouble with UTIs should try switching to a new form of birth control. Unlubricated condoms or spermicidal condoms increase irritation, which may help bacteria grow. Switching to lubricated condoms without spermicide or using a non spermicidal lubricant may help prevent UTIs.

IMPORTANT

Urinary tract infections should never be ignored, as untreated will lead to involvement of the kidney and eventually cause:

- 1. Bacterial infection of the Kidney**
- 2. Renal failure - kidney failure that might be permanent**
- 3. High Blood Pressure.**

Article by

DR GLORIA SANE

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