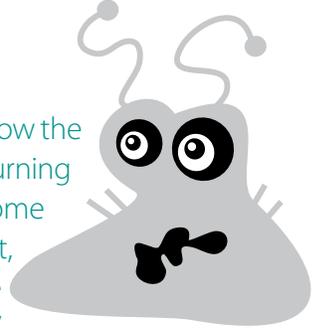


Urinary Tract Infections

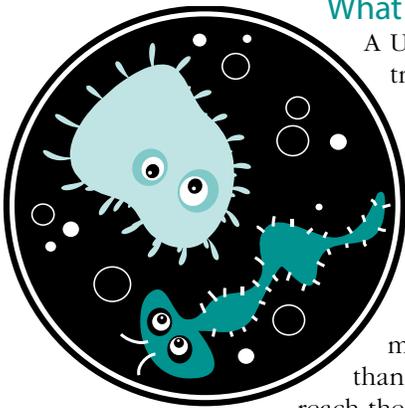
A “Number One” Concern



“Oh, no! Gotta go... again!” Maybe you’ve uttered these words and know the feeling the frequent urge to run to the bathroom accompanied by the dread of painful, burning urination. If so, then you’re one of millions of Americans who suffer from the troublesome symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI). A UTI can occur anywhere along the urinary tract, which includes the kidneys (the organs that filter waste from the blood), the ureters (the tubes that transport urine from each kidney to the bladder), the bladder (the storage “tank” for urine), and the urethra (the tube that transports waste from the bladder to the outside). Lower UTI’s (which occur in the urethra or bladder) are more common than upper UTI’s (which involve the kidneys, ureters, or both).

What Causes a UTI?

A UTI generally occurs when bacteria entering the urethra adhere to the lining of the urinary tract and, withstanding the body’s natural defense system, multiply into a full-blown infection. UTI’s may be caused by a variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses, fungi (*Candida*), and parasites, but *E. coli*, a bacterium normally found in the digestive tract, is responsible for over 80% of all UTI’s.



Who’s at Risk?

Certain factors may increase your chances of developing a UTI. Women are more at risk than men because of their anatomy: the urethra is shorter than in men (so bacteria need to travel less distance to reach the bladder) and closer to the anus, a common source of bacteria. In fact, between 20 and 50 percent of women will experience at least one incidence of a UTI, with the possibility of recurrences. Also, diabetics are prone to developing an infection, since glucose in the urine provides a good culture medium for bacteria. And although men generally have fewer UTI’s, they can develop them later in life, due to prostate enlargement.

What are the Symptoms?

If you’ve ever experienced the “Oh no, gotta go” feeling, you’re no doubt familiar with the typical symptoms of a UTI—cloudy or strong-smelling urine, possibly with blood present, the urgent need to urinate accompanied by pain or burning, and lower abdominal pain. More specific symptoms are based on the location of infection in the urinary tract. As mentioned, most cases involve the lower tract—the urethra and bladder.

Cystitis, or bladder infection, is caused by bacteria (most often *E. coli*) entering the urethra and multiplying in the bladder. Symptoms include lower abdominal pressure or pain, frequent urination with pain or burning, and strong-smelling urine. **Urethritis**, or inflammation and infection of the urethra, is accompanied by burning during urination and can be caused by sexually transmitted diseases such as herpes and Chlamydia and gonorrhea. **Acute pyelonephritis**, or kidney infection, is a serious condition that occurs after infection spreads from the bladder. Symptoms include upper back and side pain, fever, chills, nausea or vomiting.

UTI Risk Factors

- ◆ Bowel Incontinence
- ◆ Catheterization
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Female
- ◆ Kidney stones
- ◆ Immobility
- ◆ Insufficient fluid intake
- ◆ Menopause
- ◆ Pregnancy
- ◆ Sexual intercourse
- ◆ Using a diaphragm for birth control

[Source: www.nih.gov]

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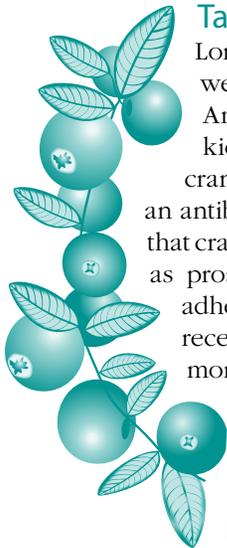
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How are UTI's Treated?

Contact your health care provider promptly if you suspect a UTI. While infections of the lower urinary tract are generally more uncomfortable than serious, they must be diagnosed and treated right away. This is especially true of chronic or recurrent UTI's (at least two infections in six months or three in one year) due to the possibility of infection spreading to the kidneys, which could cause permanent damage. Your doctor may order a urine culture test to determine the identity of the bacterium or organism present. Antibiotics such as amoxicillin, nitrofurantoin, trimethoprim and sulfamethoxazole are often prescribed depending on the type and location of infection.

You CAN Prevent a UTI!

The best course of action in dealing with UTI's is to help *prevent them from occurring in the first place!* While most lower UTI's usually respond well to treatment, overuse of antibiotics can lead to complications, such as allergic reactions and antibiotic resistance. And why experience uncomfortable, painful symptoms when you don't have to? You can avoid UTI's by becoming an active participant in your health on a daily basis. Here's how: ensure proper personal hygiene, drink plenty of fluids, avoid irritating foods and beverages, and take the other precautionary steps outlined below. [See box.] In addition, certain natural products may also be effective in preventing infection.



Tart Fruit Reaps Sweet Reward

Long before the advent of antibiotics, cranberries were a popular treatment for UTI's. In fact, Native Americans used the ripe fruit to treat bladder and kidney problems. Scientists first thought that the cranberry acted by acidifying the urine, providing an antibacterial effect. Current research demonstrates that cranberries contain a group of compounds known as proanthocyanidins which prevent bacteria from adhering to the lining of urinary tract. (Results of recent controlled trials indicate that cranberry is more effective in preventing, rather than treating, UTI's.) The recommended dose for UTI prevention varies, but, based on a 2002 controlled trial, is as follows: one capsule of concentrated cranberry extract (300 to 400 mg) twice daily (with a large glass of water), or 8 oz. of pure, unsweetened cranberry juice three times daily. (Note: do not ingest cranberry juice or capsules if you have a history of kidney stones or take the blood-thinning medication warfarin.)

"Pro"-Biotic = "Anti"-Infection

A healthy level of probiotics, or "good" bacteria (*Lactobacillus*, *bifidus*, etc.) in the gastrointestinal system may also lower the risk of a UTI by inhibiting pathogenic bacteria from colonizing in the urinary tract, in a mechanism similar to that of cranberries. The recommended dose is 4-6 capsules of a

Tips to Prevent a UTI

- ◆ Do not use feminine hygiene products
- ◆ Do not eat foods or drink fluids that irritate the bladder, such as alcohol or coffee, carbonated beverages or refined and processed foods.
- ◆ Drink 8 to 10 glasses per day of fluids (especially water) to dilute bacteria in the urine
- ◆ Wear cotton underwear
- ◆ Urinate promptly when you feel the urge
- ◆ Urinate after sexual intercourse
- ◆ Keep the genital area clean
- ◆ After elimination, wipe from front to back
- ◆ Drink unsweetened cranberry juice or take high potency concentrated cranberry extract in capsule form.
- ◆ Use a probiotic (such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*) regularly

probiotic containing acidophilus daily (especially important if antibiotics are prescribed).

UTI's are uncomfortable and painful; keep them in check by taking a proactive role in your health. Remember, be clean-conscious, fluid-friendly, pro-biotic and berry-merry!

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