



# Urinary Tract Infections

## What You Should Know

*Urology Care*  
FOUNDATION™

*The Official Foundation of the  
American Urological Association*

### What is a Urinary Tract Infection?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is a bacterial infection in any part of the urinary system — the kidneys, ureters, bladder or urethra. A bladder infection is the most common type of infection.

Common reasons for UTIs are having sex, high blood sugar, menopause, pregnancy, kidney stones, an enlarged prostate or having problems with your body fighting disease or other sickness. Also, UTIs are more common in people who have been on bedrest, had a urinary catheter or had certain surgeries. People of any age or gender can get UTIs, but they are much more common in women. Studies show that 60% of all women will get a UTI in their lifetime. Also, between 20% and 40% of women will have a repeat infection. Still, there are ways to prevent UTIs.

### How Can You Prevent a UTI?

Bacteria live all over our bodies and routinely get into our bladder. We often flush bacteria out by passing urine, which may stop them from causing the symptoms of a UTI.

There are ways to prevent your chances of getting a UTI. Some tips are:

**Drink water** daily to keep well hydrated and to help flush out bacteria.

**Go often** by passing urine every 3-4 hours and having daily soft bowel movements.

**Women, keep clean and get checked.** When passing urine, wipe from front to back. Check with your doctor about using certain forms of birth control, such as spermicidal foam and diaphragms, since they are known to

raise the risk of UTIs in women.

**Avoid constipation.** Constipation increases the possibility that you get UTIs

### When Should I Contact a Doctor?

Some people may have signs that suggest they have a UTI. Talk to your doctor if you have:

- Pain or burning when you pass urine or in your lower back, pelvic or bladder
- An urge to pass urine often, even when your bladder is empty
- Urine that is cloudy, bloody and/or foul-smelling

### How are UTIs Treated?

**Simple UTIs** can be treated with a short 3-to-5-day course of antibiotics. Take all of your antibiotics, even if you start feeling better before your pills are gone.

**Complicated UTIs** may need a longer course of antibiotics. In some cases, intravenous (IV) antibiotics may be needed. Sometimes antibiotics both as an IV and pills are needed and treatment may last many weeks.

### Are there Tips for Recurrent UTIs?

UTIs are recurrent when you get more than three UTIs in a year. Unless UTIs are fully treated, they can often return. Pain and the urge to pass urine may go away after a few doses of antibiotics, but you should still take the full course of the drug even if you feel better. You should also drink plenty of liquids to help you heal. Some other tips for recurrent UTI's are listed next.

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### Do...

- o Follow your doctor's advice on treatment
- o Take medicine at scheduled times and take all of it, even after you feel better
- o Drink plenty of liquids while taking antibiotics
- o Contact your doctor if you don't better in a couple of days. They may want to try some other treatment or order more tests
- o Discuss prevention strategies with your doctor

### Don't...

- o Skip a dose of your medicine as each dose is needed to get better
- o Stop taking your medicine just because you start feeling better
- o Take antibiotics prescribed for someone else
- o Save any medicine for the next time you are ill
- o Get constipated

This fact sheet is brought to you by the Urology Care Foundation in partnership with the Society of Urodynamics, Female Pelvic Medicine and Urogenital Reconstruction.

### ABOUT THE UROLOGY CARE FOUNDATION

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, [UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions](http://UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions) or go to [UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist](http://UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist) to find a doctor near you.

### DISCLAIMER:

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For more information about urologic conditions, visit [UrologyHealth.org/Download](http://UrologyHealth.org/Download) or call 800-828-7866.