

URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)

What is UTI?

Normally urine is free of any bacteria. Sometimes the bacteria ascend into the urethra & into the urinary bladder. This is called Urinary tract infection or UTI. Generally the disease stops here but sometimes the infection can ascend up into the kidneys & can cause serious infections.

What are the symptoms of a urinary tract infection?

UTI can cause pain in the lower part of abdomen.. People feel the need to use the washroom frequently & urgently. When they try to pass urine, only a few drops of urine come out with burning sensation. The urine may be foul smelling or may be tinged with small amount of blood. Occasionally patient may complain of inability to control urine.

The infections ascends further up into the kidneys . Kidney infections often cause fevers & back pain. These infections need to be treated promptly because a kidney infection can quickly spread into the bloodstream & cause a life-threatening condition.

What causes urinary tract infections?

Large numbers of bacteria live in the rectal area & also on the skin surrounding the anus. Bacteria get into the urine from the urethra & travel into the bladder. Women are more prone to UTI as they have shorter urethras than men so bacteria have a shorter distance to travel to reach the bladder.

Just as some people are more prone to colds, some people are more prone to UTIs. Women who have gone through menopause lose the protective effects of estrogen (female sex hormone) that decrease the likelihood of UTIs. Sexual intercourse also increases the frequency of UTIs.

Women who use diaphragms have also been found to

UTI-TREATMENT

have an increased risk. Using condoms with spermicidal foam is also known to be associated with an increase in UTIs in women.

Diabetes also put people at higher risk for UTIs because of the body's capacity to fight infection is reduced.

How are urinary tract infections diagnosed?

Ways to diagnose a UTI are via urine examination & urine culture. A sample of urine is examined under a microscope by looking for indications of infection — bacteria or pus cells in the urine. Generally culture is advised at the same time to know which bacteria is the cause of infection & to know the antibiotic sensitivity.

If the patient is having fever, pain in the side of abdomen & vomiting along with symptoms of a UTI, then urgent medical attention is advised.

How are urinary tract infections treated?

A simple UTI can be treated with a short course of oral antibiotics. A three-day course of antibiotics will usually treat most UTIs. The patient should be encouraged to drink plenty of water as it helps flush out the bacteria.

If the infection has spread into the kidney, you may be advised admission for intravenous antibiotics. Also you will need to take the medicines (both injections & tablets) for a longer period of time, upto 4-6 weeks. Once the fever & infection is under control then the antibiotics are given by mouth for a period of at least 2 more weeks.

Will a UTI cause damage to the kidneys?

If the UTI is treated early, then there will probably be no lasting influence on your urinary tract. Recurrent or unrecognized UTIs could cause damage if not treated immediately.

How can UTIs be avoided?

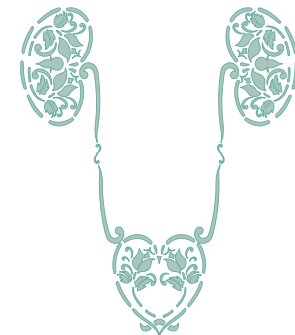
There are some simple steps women can use to avoid UTIs.

UTI-PREVENTION

- Drink plenty of fluids to keep well hydrated.
- Do not delay urination as holding in urine & not emptying bladder completely can increase risk of UTIs.
- After moving bowels the area should be cleaned from front to back to prevent bacteria around the anus from entering the vagina or urethra.
- Women after menopause having repeated UTIs may be advised to have Estrogen replacement only under the guidance of a gynecologist and/or primary care doctor.
- Urination after sexual intercourse may also decrease the risk of UTI because it can flush out any bacteria that were introduced during intercourse.
- Avoid use of certain forms of birth control, such as spermicidal foam & diaphragms, as these are known to increase the risk of UTIs.

What if the patient is pregnant?

If the patient is pregnant & has symptoms of a UTI, then urgent medical attention is needed. UTIs during pregnancy can put both mother & baby at risk if not addressed quickly & properly.



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