

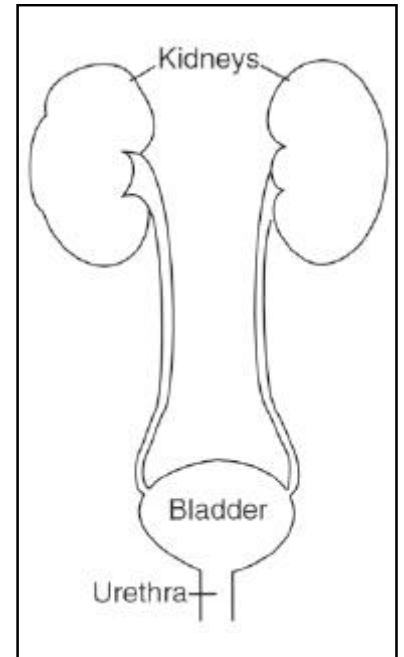
Urinary Tract Infections in Women

Since urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a common problem for women, it is fortunate that they are generally easy to treat.

A UTI is a bacterial infection which usually begins in the urethra. From here bacteria often travel to the bladder, causing a bladder infection. If the infection is not treated promptly, it may move into the kidneys, infecting them as well (*see illustration*). Recognizing the signs of infection is important for all women, but is particularly important for women who are pregnant.

Following are some symptoms associated with UTIs. However, note that some UTIs show few symptoms and cause no pain or fever. UTIs may cause:

- Lower abdominal pressure
- Frequent and urgent urination
- Burning during urination
- Back pain and fever
- Blood in the urine
- Dark, foul-smelling urine



Diagnosis

If you suspect you have a UTI, call your doctor. You will be asked a series of questions to determine if you are likely to have a simple urinary tract infection. If your symptoms indicate a possible UTI, an appointment for a “midstream clean catch” urinalysis or a thorough evaluation is recommended.

Treatment

Women between 18 and 65 years of age with symptoms of a urinary tract infection and no other complicating factors have an excellent chance of curing the infection with a three-day course of antibiotics. Advantages of using a shorter course of antibiotics include fewer side effects, fewer yeast infections and lower medication costs.

However, the three-day course of antibiotics is not effective for all women. You may need to be treated with a longer course of antibiotics if you:

- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have a complicating medical condition, such as diabetes
- Have a history of frequent UTIs

Medication

If antibiotics are prescribed, inform your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or have any medication allergies.

Some tips to remember while taking your medication:

- Take all medication prescribed.
- Drink at least six glasses of fluid a day.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can irritate the bladder.
- Avoid excess sun exposure while taking certain antibiotics.

If you have recurrent or chronic UTIs, a urologic evaluation may be recommended.

continued on next page

Preventing UTIs

There are a number of things you can do to prevent urinary tract infections:

- Empty your bladder every three hours while you are awake, whether or not you feel an urge to do so. Avoid long intervals between urination.
- Drink at least six to eight glasses of water daily.
- Shower instead of taking a bath. Avoid using bubble bath or other cosmetic bath products.
- Avoid using any feminine hygiene sprays and scented douches.
- Avoid using a vaginal diaphragm if you are prone to UTIs.
- Empty your bladder after sexual intercourse. Sexual relations may cause UTIs.
- After a bowel movement, clean the area around the anus gently, wiping from front to back and never repeating with the same tissue. Soft, white, nonscented tissue is recommended.
- After urination, wipe from front to back.

This brochure is based on guidelines developed by a team of health care experts at the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI), of which Park Nicollet Health Services is an active member. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as scientific evidence changes. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.



Park Nicollet

Park Nicollet Institute © 2003
11205 (7/03)