

Sexual Health

URINARY TRACT INFECTION



creating healthy communities
together

May 2010

A urinary tract infection (UTI) or bladder infection is a bacterial infection of the urinary tract system. It usually develops in the lower part of the urinary tract (bladder and urethra) and if it is not treated may move into the upper urinary tract (ureters and kidneys). A UTI can affect both men and women.

How do you get a UTI?

A urinary tract infection occurs when bacteria that normally live in the intestines and on the genitals get into the urethra. These bacteria travel into the bladder and cause an infection.

What are the symptoms of a UTI?

Not everyone with a UTI has symptoms, but most people experience some of the following:

- You feel the need to urinate (pee) but only a few drops come out.
- You are urinating more frequently than usual.
- You have pain or burning when you urinate.
- There is blood in the urine.
- You have cloudy, bad smelling urine.
- You have pain in the lower abdomen.
- You have back pain.
- You have fever or chills.

How do you get tested for a UTI?

To find out if you have a UTI, your health care provider will ask you to give a urine sample. They will likely check your urine for infection in their office and may send the sample to a lab.

How is a UTI treated?

A UTI is treated with antibiotics. It is important to finish all the antibiotics even if you feel better.

How do you prevent a UTI?

- Drink lots of water everyday.
- Don't resist the urge to urinate, do so when you feel the need.
- Empty your bladder completely.
- Urinate before and after sexual intercourse.
- Wipe from the front to the back after going to the bathroom.
- Avoid deodorant tampons, pads or feminine hygiene sprays which can irritate the urethra.
- Avoid douching.
- Take showers instead of tub baths.
- Wash your genitals after sexual intercourse and daily.

Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit.