

Urinary Tract Infections (UTI's)

A urinary tract infection happens when bacteria enter the tract at any point; the urinary opening and the bladder are the sites of most infections. Women are at greater risk of developing a urinary tract infection than are men. A urinary tract infection limited to your bladder can be painful and annoying; however, serious consequences can occur if a urinary tract infection spreads to the kidneys.

Not everyone with a urinary tract infection develops recognizable signs and symptoms, but most people have some. In general, urinary tract infection signs and symptoms develop rapidly and can include:

- A strong, persistent urge to urinate
- A burning sensation when urinating
- Passing frequent, small amounts of urine
- Cloudy, dark, smelly, or bloody urine
- Upper back pain and side, high fever, chills, and shaking
- Lower abdominal pain or pressure, pelvic pressure, frequent and painful urination, low-grade fever
- Burning with urination

However, each type of urinary tract infection may result in more-specific signs and symptoms, depending on which part of your urinary tract is infected.

Risk factors include:

- Being Female: Half of all women will develop a urinary tract infection at some time, and many experience repeated infections. One key reason is the female anatomy; women have a shorter urethra, so the bacteria only have a short distance to travel.
- Being Sexually Active: Sexual activity can irritate the urethra, which allows bacteria to travel more quickly to the bladder.
- Using certain types of birth control: Women who use diaphragms and spermicides for birth control are at higher risk.
- History of kidneys stones or other urinary obstruction.
- Having a suppressed immune system such as diabetes or other disease

Treatment:

Antibiotics are prescribed for 3-10 days. Take the entire course of antibiotics. If symptoms persist or reoccur, return to your health care provider. You may receive a medication to numb the urinary tract to relieve burning. This medication makes your urine a bright orange.

To avoid a UTI, try these:

- Drink plenty of fluids – cranberry juice may have infection-fighting properties. Avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine. These can irritate the urinary tract in some people.
- Do not wait to urinate for long periods of time. Urinate when you feel the urge.
- Wash the genital area daily with a mild soap and rinse well.
- Do not use douches, perfumed soaps or sprays, or deodorant pads or tampons.
- Urinate before and after intercourse. Use enough lubrication during sex.

Sources and/or additional resources:

WebMD: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/urinary-tract-infections-in-teens-and-adults-topic-overview>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.