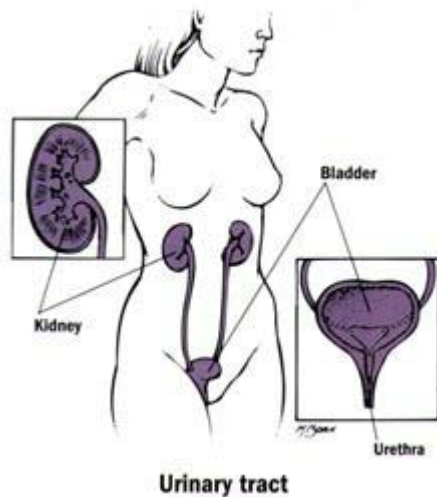


Urinary Tract Infections in Women

What causes urinary tract infections?

Most urinary tract infections are caused by bacteria. Any part of your urinary tract can become infected. The urinary tract includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra. Bladder and urethra infections are the most common.



How do I know if I have a urinary tract infection?

The box below lists possible signs of a urinary tract infection. Nausea, lower back pain and fever may be signs of a kidney infection. Call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

Possible signs of a urinary tract infection

- A burning sensation when you urinate
- Feeling like you need to urinate more often than usual
- Feeling the urge to urinate but not being able to
- Leaking a little urine
- Cloudy, dark, smelly or bloody urine

Why do women get urinary tract infections more often than men?

Women tend to get urinary tract infections more often than men because bacteria can reach the bladder more easily in women. The urethra is shorter in women than in men, so bacteria have a shorter distance to travel.

The urethra is also located near the rectum in women. Bacteria from the rectum can easily travel up the urethra and cause infections.

Having sex may also cause urinary tract infections in women because bacteria can be pushed into the urethra. Using a diaphragm can lead to infections because diaphragms push against the urethra and make it harder to completely empty the bladder. The urine that stays in the bladder is more likely to grow bacteria and cause infections.

How are urinary tract infections treated?

If your family doctor thinks you have a urinary tract infection, he or she will probably test a sample of your urine to find out if there are bacteria in it. Your doctor will then prescribe an antibiotic for you if you have an infection. Usually, symptoms of the infection go away 1 to 2 days after you start taking the medicine. Make sure you take all the medicine, even if you are feeling better.

Your doctor may also suggest a medicine to numb your urinary tract and make you feel better while the antibiotic starts to work. The medicine makes your urine turn bright orange, so don't be alarmed by the color when you urinate.

What can I do if I have frequent infections?

If you have urinary tract infections often, you can try some of the suggestions in the box below. Talk with your family doctor about what changes would be helpful for you.

Your doctor also may give you a low dose of medicine for several months or longer to prevent infections from coming back.

If having sex seems to cause your infections, your doctor may suggest that you take a single low dose antibiotic pill after you have sex to prevent urinary tract infections. Tips on preventing urinary tract infections

- Drink plenty of water to flush out bacteria. Drinking cranberry juice may also help prevent urinary tract infections. However, if you're taking warfarin (brand name: Coumadin), check with your doctor before using cranberry juice to prevent urinary tract infections. Your doctor may need to adjust your warfarin dose or you may need to have more frequent blood tests.
- Don't hold your urine. Urinate when you feel like you need to.
- Wipe from front to back after bowel movements.
- Urinate after having sex to help wash away bacteria.
- Use enough lubrication during sex. Try using a small amount of lubricant (such as K-Y Jelly) before sex if you're a little dry.
- If you get urinary tract infections often, you may want to avoid using a diaphragm as a birth control method. Ask your doctor about other birth control choices.

How serious are urinary tract infections?

Urinary tract infections can be painful. But medicine can keep them from becoming a serious threat to your health.

The kidneys can also be infected, which can be a more serious problem. Kidney infections usually require an antibiotic for a longer period of time and are sometimes treated in the hospital.

Source

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