

enCATHopedia Volume 1

URINARY
TRACT
INFECTIONS

What is a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

A UTI is an infection of any part of the urinary tract caused by bacteria growing in the urethra and bladder. Like any other kind of infection, the longer it goes untreated, the more serious the complications can be. An untreated UTI with symptoms such as fever or bloody or cloudy urine can eventually lead to kidney damage.

UTIs are sometimes a consequence of self-catheterization. If you suspect that you have a UTI, contact your doctor immediately - home cures or other remedies cannot, in most cases, eliminate the infection completely.

Signs of a Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

A urinary tract infection usually involves a change in urination pattern. Signs of a UTI include:

- Frequent urge to urinate
- Incontinence
- A burning sensation when emptying the bladder
- Blood in urine
- Cloudy, discolored or smelly urine
- Lower back and abdominal pain
- Fever
- Feeling generally unwell

How self-catheterizers can avoid UTIs

Ensure good hygiene

Wash your hands before each catheterization. The genital area can be washed with a mild soap once a day, but remember that washing more often can remove the natural good bacteria and mucosa that helps fight infection. Avoid touching the catheter tube, as this may contaminate its surface. Some catheters have an insertion aid or sterile handle that helps with insertion of the catheter tube without touching it.

Empty completely and often

Excess urine is often a cause of infection. Take your time when catheterizing. Withdraw the catheter slowly to ensure the bladder is empty. It is important that the catheter is of the right length - tubes that are too short can leave residual urine, increasing the risk for infection. Ask your doctor or nurse for help in determining the right tube length for you.

The rule of thumb is to self-catheterize 4-6 times a day at regular intervals. If you void more than 400 ml of urine at any one time, you are waiting too long. Medical trials have shown that a high volume of urine in the bladder increases the risk of UTIs.



Avoid friction

The urethra and bladder have natural mucosa that prevents bacteria from causing harm. A catheter with a hydrophilic coating binds water to the tube, making it very slippery going in and coming out and protecting the natural mucosa from damage. Not all hydrophilic catheters are the same, so ask your doctor or nurse for help in choosing one with proof of its safety.

Drink fluids

Drinking 1½-2 liters of fluid every day may flush harmful bacteria out and help prevent UTIs.

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