



UTI

What is a UTI?

In a bladder infection, bacteria invade and overgrow in the bladder. Sometimes the bacteria can take hold in the kidneys or the tubes that drain urine from the kidneys to the bladder. These conditions are all known as urinary tract infections, or UTIs. They are more common in women than in men.

What are Symptoms of UTIs ?

The symptoms of a bladder infection tend to come on suddenly and include:

- painful urination and a burning sensation needing to urinate frequently
- sudden urges to empty your bladder, called urinary urgency
- pain in your central lower abdomen
- blood in your urine

Symptoms of a UTI that involves the kidneys include the following, in addition to the preceding ones:

- pain in your sides or back that doesn't change when you change position
- fever and chills
- nausea and vomiting

What are the Causes of UTIs ?

Most UTIs are caused by the bacterium *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which is naturally present in your body. The bacterium gets into the urinary tract through the urethra. The urethra is the tube that drains urine from your bladder through your penis.

UTIs are more common in women than in men because their urethra is shorter and the bacteria need to travel a shorter distance to reach their bladder.

There are many types of bacteria that normally live in the vagina and happily coexist. And they keep each other in check, like a mini-ecosystem. The hormone estrogen allows the "good" bacteria called *Lactobacillus* to thrive. These bacteria produce acid, which lowers the pH in the vagina, which helps keep the "bad" bacteria in check.

What are the factors which put you at risk for UTIs ?

- being immobile for long periods
- not drinking enough fluids
- controlling you pee for long periods of time



recent urinary tract surgery
diabetes
fecal incontinence
pregnancy
poor vaginal hygiene

What are the types of UTI s?

Uncomplicated UTI -describes an infection in a healthy patient with a structurally and functionally normal urinary tract.

Complicated UTI - is associated with factors that increase the chance of acquiring bacteria and decrease the efficacy of therapy like pregnancy, elderly, diabetes, immunosuppression.

Recurrent UTI- 2 or more episodes of UTI in 6 months or 3 or more in a year.

How do you diagnose a UTI?

To diagnose a UTI, your doctor will examine you and ask about symptoms, including any past history of UTIs. You may be asked to provide a urine sample to check for pus and bacteria. The presence of pus strongly points to a UTI.

What is the Treatment for UTIs ?

If you have a UTI, you will need to take antibiotic medications. Depending on the type of antibiotic your doctor prescribes, you will take the pills either once or twice a day for five to seven or more days.

It's also important to drink adequate fluids. You may be tempted to reduce your fluid intake if urinating is uncomfortable. Urination can help flush the bacteria from your system. Stay hydrated and urinate often while taking your antibiotics.

Many people drink cranberry juice during UTIs in hopes of clearing the infection. Lab experiments with mice showed that several substances in cranberry juice lowered bacteria count in the bladder. However, there is no strong evidence that drinking cranberry juice during a UTI eliminates the infection or speeds recovery. Initially, experts thought that the acidity in cranberries could help kill off bacteria that makes its way into your bladder. Once that was refuted, others raised the possibility that an active ingredient in cranberry juice and supplements—A-type proanthocyanidins—could help keep bacteria from sticking to your bladder wall.

In reality, the jury is still out on how exactly cranberries may have protective benefits against UTI s.

Drinking cranberry juice may cause an upset stomach or diarrhea. You also shouldn't drink cranberry juice if you're on a blood-thinning medication like warfarin, since there's some concern about it interfering with the drug's ability to work.



What are the ways to potentially reduce your risk of getting a UTI in the future?

1. Wipe from front to back when you use the bathroom.

This tip makes perfect sense when you consider your anatomy. The opening of your urethra is pretty close to your anus (bum hole), which may be teeming with gastrointestinal bacteria like E. coli. When you wipe from back to front, you risk carrying that bacteria to your urethra, where it can cause an infection. Wiping from front to back doesn't totally eliminate the risk that infection-causing bacteria will make their way to your urethra, but it definitely lowers it.

2. Don't hold your pee for hours when you need to go.

When pee hangs out in your bladder for too long, it gives bacteria a chance to grow and potentially cause an infection. By emptying the bladder as completely as possible, you are washing out any bacteria that might have been 'pushed' into the lower urinary tract.

3. Pee after sex to flush bacteria from your system.

While having sex bacteria may be pushed up around your urethra. Peeing after sex can help flush out that bacteria and lower your risk of developing a UTI.

Drinking water to try to fill up your bladder again after sex is a good idea. The whole goal is to be able to pee to push out any bacteria.

4. Don't use anything scented on any part of your private areas.

Scented powders, washes, and period products like tampons could irritate your urethra, increasing your susceptibility to a UTI.

Your vagina actually cleans itself by regularly expelling fluid and cells via discharge. Your vulva, on the other hand, should be good with plain water.

Douching can throw off your vagina's pH and make you more likely to develop a yeast infection (a fungal overgrowth) or bacterial vaginosis (when there's too much "bad" bacteria in your vagina, which could theoretically get up by your urethra and cause an infection).

5. Drink plenty of water.

It's not that water itself has magical UTI-busting properties. It's more about filling your bladder so you can pee forcefully and often, flushing out any bacteria in your urinary tract before an infection can set in. On average, women need around 8 to 10 glasses of fluids per day, including from beverages other than water and from foods.

6. Reconsider your birth control methods

Spermicides can both irritate your vagina, which can cause pH changes that may promote the growth of bacteria. This can create the perfect opportunity for bad bacteria to thrive, make its way to the opening of your urethra, and cause a UTI.

It's a similar situation with unlubricated condoms—they could irritate your vagina and increase the likelihood of bad bacteria.



Diaphragms might also increase UTI risk. These dome-shaped, silicone cups you insert into your vagina before sex to prevent an unintended pregnancy aren't super popular anymore, but they're also not totally prehistoric (a new version made a splash in 2015), so you may want to keep this info in mind.

How do you manage recurrent UTI s?

It may help to go on a preventive low-dose antibiotic for a few months to try to ward off infections, or to take an antibiotic after sex.