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URINARY TRACT INFECTION

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What is a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is often a painful infection of a part of your urinary system (bladder, kidneys, ureter). UTI's are the second most common type of infection.

They are more frequent in women—where 50% will have at least one UTI in their lifetime. This is due to the urethra being shorter in women, and therefore less distance for bacteria to travel to the bladder and kidneys.

Others at risk include; diabetics, those with a spinal cord injury, or a recent cystoscopy or post urological surgery.

What causes urinary tract infections?

Most urine infections result from bacteria entering the bladder via your urethra (water pipe).

Risk factors include:

- incomplete bladder emptying
- stones
- catheters
- passing urine infrequently
- sexual intercourse
- anatomical problems in the kidneys, bladder or ureters

Most urine infections are caused by the bacterium *E coli*, but other types may be responsible (*Klebsiella*, *Proteus*). The type of organism can sometimes provide a clue to the underlying causes of infection.

Pyelonephritis is the inflammation of the kidney, again typically caused by *E coli*— presenting with urinary symptoms, fever and flank tenderness/pain.

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

You may experience the following symptoms:

- burning or stinging on passing urine
- smelly/cloudy urine
- urgency / frequency of passing urine
- pain in lower abdomen, lower back or urethra
- fever, nausea, shaking, chills
- blood-stained urine

What are the symptoms a UTI?

Symptoms can vary from mild to severe, and may depend on whether the infection is confined to your bladder or has affected the kidneys also.

The simplest way to confirm an urinary tract infection is by urinalysis. This can be done using a urine 'dipstick' which tests for abnormalities ie; blood, protein, glucose, nitrites. Definitive results are diagnosed by use of a microscopy/culture/sensitivity test (MC&S). This requires you to provide a mid-stream sample of urine to be collected in a sterile container and is sent to the laboratory for further testing.

What is the treatment for a UTI?

Generally a UTI requires a course of antibiotics. The specific type and dose will depend on which bacteria is present and which antibiotic it is sensitive to.

To help with your symptoms you can also:

- increase your fluid intake
- take regular painkillers like Panadol—this will also help reduce any fever
- take agents that help to alkalise your urine which may reduce burning/stinging (ie: Ural, Citravescent)

Tips at preventing UTI

Below are some effective measures to help prevent UTI.

- avoid 'holding on' to urine—void regularly, which may mean drinking enough to make you pass urine every 2-3 hours
- emptying your bladder as much as possible each time you pass urine
- good hygiene—women wiping from front (vagina) to back (anus) after toileting
- passing urine before and soon after sexual intercourse
- avoiding condoms and spermicides
- showers instead of baths
- avoid constipation

The content provided within this document is intended as a guide only and does not apply to all patients. Additional information, including patient specific potential risks, must be obtained during consultation with your Urologist.