

URINARY TRACT INFECTION

About Your Diagnosis

Urinary tract infection is a bacterial infection that can affect the bladder or kidneys or both. The most common cause is a bacteria called Escherichia coli, which is found in the gastrointestinal tract.

Urinary tract infection is not contagious. The bacteria can find their way into the urinary tract by way of catheters or tubes used during medical treatment, when there is blockage of the urinary tract by stones or congenital abnormalities, or when women have vigorous sexual activity, which allows the bacteria to enter the urethra and bladder. Urinary tract infection can also occur when an infection elsewhere in the body travels through the bloodstream to the kidneys. Urinary tract infection can be detected by culturing a urine specimen.

Living With Your Diagnosis

Signs and symptoms of an infection include burning upon urination, frequency and urgency to urinate, fever and chills, cloudy or bloody urine, lower back pain and lower abdominal pain, and fatigue.

Treatment

Antibiotics will be needed for 7–10 days. The drugs commonly used are ampicillin, ciprofloxacin, Bactrim or Septra, and Macrochantin. Fluid intake should be increased to help flush the urinary system. Caffeine and alcohol should be avoided because they will irritate the urinary system. Analgesics for the urinary system such as pyridium may be prescribed. This drug will turn your urine orange. Sitz baths may also ease the discomfort. Bed rest should be encouraged until fever and pain are gone. No special diet is needed, but drinking juices to acidify the urine can help, such as cranberry or prune juice. Taking Vitamin C can also help.

The DOs

- * Take the antibiotics until finished. A repeat urine culture may be needed after the antibiotics are completed to make sure the urine is free of bacteria.
- * Take the antibiotics with food to help relieve any stomach upset they may cause.
- * Increase your fluid intake. Include cranberry or prune juice.
- * Urinate frequently during the day and after intercourse to help avoid infections.
- * Use sitz baths to help ease discomfort.
- * Rest in bed until fever and pain subside.
- * Wipe from the vaginal area toward the rectum after bowel movements to avoid introducing bacteria to the urethral area.

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The DON'Ts

- * Don't skip doses or stop taking antibiotics before they are finished.
- * Don't resume sexual relations until the fever and symptoms have cleared.
- * Don't hold your urine for long periods.
- * Don't drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol.

When to Call Your Doctor

- * If your fever continues after 48 hours of antibiotic therapy.
- * If your symptoms return after you complete your antibiotics.

For More Information

National Kidney and Urologic Disease Information Clearinghouse

301-654-4415

Bladder Health Council

388 W. Pratt St., Suite 401

Baltimore, MD 21201

Internet Sites

<http://www.healthfinder.gov> (Choose SEARCH to search by topic.)

<http://www.healthanswers.com>

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