

Frequently Asked Questions about...

Urinary Tract Infections

Q. What is a urinary tract infection?

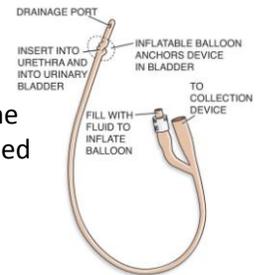
A. A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection of the bladder, kidneys, ureters, or urethra that occurs when bacteria enter the urinary system. As a result of the infection, a person's urine, which is normally sterile, will contain bacteria. This type of infection occurs more often in females versus males due to the anatomy of the bladder and urethra.

Q. What are the symptoms of a UTI?

A. Common symptoms of urinary tract infections may include burning during urination, burning and pain in the lower abdomen, fever, and cloudy or bloody urine. In some cases, a person may have a catheter-associated UTI (CAUTI) and not experience any symptoms.

Q. What are catheter-associated UTIs?

A. A urinary catheter is a thin tube placed in the bladder to drain urine. Urine drains through the tube into a bag that collects the urine. Catheter-associated UTIs (CAUTIs) are infections caused by bacteria that have entered the urinary tract during the catheter's insertion, through the catheter tube, or through the catheter's external surface.



Q. Why may patients in healthcare facilities be at risk for contracting UTIs?

A. Patients in healthcare facilities may be at a higher risk for developing a UTI due to older age, poor hygiene, or poor hydration (not drinking enough fluids). Female sex, older age, type of catheterization, duration of catheterization, and quality of catheter are risk factors for CAUTI.

Q. Can UTIs be treated?

A. Yes. Often, a UTI that does not present with any symptoms will not be treated. In persons with symptoms, antibiotics may be prescribed to eliminate the bacteria causing the infection.

Q. What is the best way to prevent UTIs?

A. The best way to prevent UTIs is to practice good personal hygiene by keeping the area around the urethra clean.

For persons who use catheters, there are additional ways to reduce the risk of infection:

- Assure that care providers clean their hands before and after inserting, changing, or cleaning the catheter site.
- Use soap and water to clean insertion site.
- Secure tubing to minimize movement.
- Use smallest size catheter.
- During insertion, use aseptic technique and sterile equipment (in acute care) and clean technique for intermittent catheterization in non-acute care.
- Keep catheter and drainage bag **below** the bladder at **all** times (even during transport).
- Maintain a **closed** drainage system at **all** times.
- Avoid contamination when disconnecting and reconnecting catheter.
- Review the need for the catheter on a daily basis and discontinue as soon as possible to reduce the risk of bacterial build-up and infection.

Contact your local health department if you have additional questions about urinary tract infections