

# HEALTHY IS UNDERSTANDING UTIs AND THE URINARY SYSTEM

## FACTS

**A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection in any part of the urinary system. The urinary system includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra.**

**Most infections involve the lower urinary tract – the bladder and the urethra.**

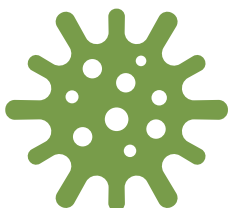


## WOMEN

**are at greater risk of developing a UTI than are men.**

**UTIs don't always cause symptoms. When they do, they may include:**

- A strong urge to urinate that doesn't go away
- A burning feeling when urinating
- Urinating often, and passing small amounts of urine
- Urine that looks cloudy
- Urine that appears red, bright pink or cola-colored
- Strong-smelling urine
- Pelvic pain, in women — especially in the center of the pelvis and around the area of the pubic bone



**UTIs typically occur when bacteria enter the urinary tract through the urethra and begin to spread in the bladder.**

## RISK FACTORS

### **Female anatomy:**

Women have a shorter urethra than men do. As a result, there's less distance for bacteria to travel to reach the bladder.

### **Certain types of birth control:**

Using diaphragms for birth control may increase the risk of UTIs. Using spermicidal agents also can increase risk.

### **Menopause:**

After menopause, a decline in circulating estrogen causes changes in the urinary tract. The changes can increase the risk of UTIs.

### **Urinary tract problems:**

Babies born with problems with their urinary tracts may have trouble urinating. Urine can back up in the urethra, which can cause UTIs.

### **Blockages in the urinary tract:**

Kidney stones or an enlarged prostate can trap urine in the bladder. As a result, risk of UTIs is higher.

### **Suppressed immune system:**

Diabetes and other diseases can impair the immune system — the body's defense against germs. This can increase the risk of UTIs.

### **Catheter use:**

People who can't urinate on their own often must use a tube, called a catheter, to urinate. Using a catheter increases the risk of UTIs. Catheters may be used by people who are in the hospital.

## RISK FACTORS

### Recent urinary procedure:

Urinary surgery or an exam of your urinary tract that involves medical instruments can both increase the risk of developing a UTI.

### ALZHEIMER'S PARKINSON'S AND DIABETES

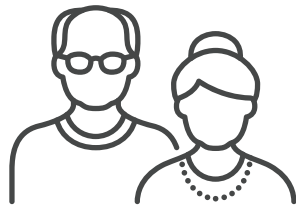


These diseases may lead to urinary retention or neurogenic bladder and increase the risk of UTIs.

An infection may occur in older adults who often wear incontinence briefs if the briefs aren't changed regularly.

### Several other factors put older adults at risk for developing a UTI:

- A history of UTIs
- Dementia
- Catheter use
- Bladder inconstitence
- Bowel inconstitence
- A prolapsed bladder



**Your UTI risk increases with age. According to one study, more than one-third of all infections in nursing home residents are UTIs.**

**More than 10 percent of women over age 65 report having a UTI within the past year. That number increases to almost 30 percent in women over 85.**

## PREVENTION

### Urinate when you need to:

Don't go without urinating for longer than three or four hours. The longer urine stays in the bladder, the more time bacteria have to grow.

### Wipe from front to back:

Do this after urinating and after a bowel movement. It helps prevent the spread of bacteria from the anus to the vagina and urethra.

### Empty bladder after having sex:

Also drink a full glass of water to help flush bacteria.

### Avoid irritating feminine products:

Using them in the genital area can irritate the urethra. These products include deodorant sprays, douches and powders.

### Change your birth control method:

Diaphragms, unlubricated condoms or condoms treated with spermicide can contribute to bacterial growth.

### Wear cotton underpants:

Avoid tight-fitting pants which trap moisture, and change out of wet bathing suits and workout clothes quickly.

### Take showers or limit baths to 30 minutes or less

Sources: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/urinary-tract-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20353447>  
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/urinary-tract-infections>

**About 10 in 25 women and 3 in 25 men will have symptoms of a UTI during their lifetime.**

**Most UTIs are not serious, but some can lead to serious problems like kidney infections.**

<https://www.urologyhealth.org/healthy-living/urologyhealth-extra/magazine-archives/summer-2016/understanding-utis-across-the-lifespan>