

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)



A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection of any part of the urinary system: kidneys, ureters, bladder or urethra. Most commonly it involves the lower urinary tract- urethra (urethritis) and bladder (cystitis). If it spreads to the kidneys, a more serious infection called pyelonephritis can occur. Most often a UTI is caused by bacteria from the bowel that is present on the skin, spreading into the urethra and traveling up the urinary system. They are fairly common in people with vulvas; 1 in 5 people with vulvas will develop a UTI in their lifetime. This is because the urethra in people with vulvas is in closer proximity to the rectum. Additionally, in sexual intercourse bacteria in the vaginal area can be transferred into the urethra. In people with penises, urethritis is usually caused by sexually transmitted infections, usually gonorrhea or chlamydia.

DIAGNOSIS

Based on history, physical exam and symptoms. Your provider will ask that you provide a urine sample for urinalysis and possible urine culture. Let your provider know if you have multiple UTIs within a 6-month period.

TREATMENT

If your urinalysis indicates probable infection, you will be started on antibiotics. It is important that you follow the instructions on the packaging and complete the full course of treatment. You may also be recommended a medicine to numb your urinary tract while the antibiotics work. This medicine may turn your urine orange, so don't be alarmed if your urinary color changes. A kidney infection will require more intensive treatment. Other recommendations to help with symptoms include:

- Drink plenty of water
- Avoid coffee, alcohol and soft drinks because these can irritate your bladder
- Apply a warm heating pad to your abdomen to minimize discomfort

PREVENTION

- Drink plenty of water
- Don't hold in your urine for long periods of time. Urinate when you feel like you need to.
- Urinate before and after sexual intercourse.
- Wipe from front to back.
- Avoid potentially irritating feminine products such as douches or powders.

CALL STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IF

You have signs of kidney involvement (**pyelonephritis**) including:

- Lower back and side/flank pain
- High fever, shaking, chills
- Nausea/vomiting

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/urinary-tract-infections/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/urinary-tract-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20353447>

SYMPTOMS

- Burning sensation during or after urination
- Urinating small amounts frequently
- Strong persistent need to urinate
- Bloody or cloudy urine, strong smelling urine
- Feeling of pressure in lower abdomen/pelvis
- Vaginal or penile discharge

RISK FACTORS

- Anatomy: more common in people with vulvas
- Sexual intercourse
- Waiting too long to urinate
- Diaphragm or spermicide contraceptive
- Pregnancy or menopause
- Diabetes, other causes of suppressed immune system



STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Clinic: 205-934-3580

After Hours: 205-934-3411

<https://www.uab.edu/students/health/>

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