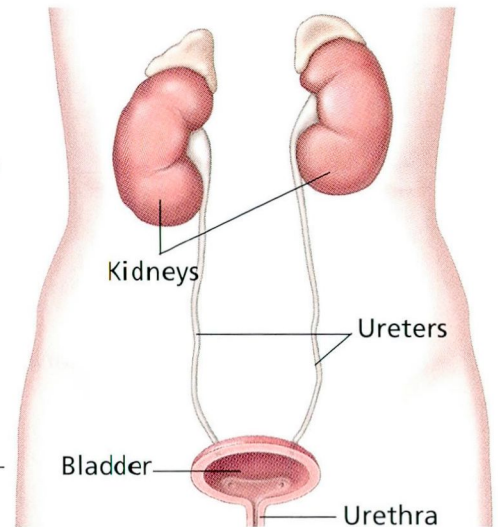


Urinary tract infections

NORMALLY A PERSON'S URINE is free of bacteria, viruses, or fungi. However, bacteria are naturally present on the skin, in the lower bowel, and in the stool itself, and sometimes they enter the urinary tract via the urethra. Once there they multiply and cause inflammation of the bladder wall. Occasionally, an infection can ascend even higher into the ureters and kidneys.



Symptoms:

- An urgent or frequent need to urinate
- Difficulty urinating
- Burning or itching during urination
- Cloudy or foul-smelling urine
- Cramps in the lower back or lower abdomen
- Slight fever
- Diabetes
- Blood in the urine
- A urinary tract infection in the past 2 months or five in the past year

If you think you have a urinary tract infection:

■ Call your doctor or nurse-practitioner. Often, he or she can prescribe an antibiotic over the phone. However, you may need to come to the office if you have any of the following:

- If you are pregnant
- Pain in the side between your ribs and hips
- Fever or chills
- A kidney infection or kidney stones
- Vaginal discharge with itching, burning, or pain

How are urinary tract infections treated?

■ You will probably need to take an antibiotic for 3 days. In 80% of the cases, this treatment makes the symptoms go away within 3 days. However, do not stop taking the pills even if the symptoms go away—you must take all of them unless your doctor tells you to stop. If your symptoms do not go away in 3 days or if they get worse, call your doctor again.

To protect yourself:

- Drink at least 6 glasses of water a day
- Wipe yourself from front to back after urinating and after having a bowel movement
- Don't douche
- Don't use feminine deodorants on your genital area

- Change tampons and feminine pads often
- Empty your bladder shortly before and after having sex
- Use a water-based lubricant during sex if you have vaginal dryness
- Wash the genital area with warm water before having sex
- Check with your doctor if you think your diaphragm is causing infection
- Wear cotton underwear
- Take showers instead of baths
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing and pantyhose

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Kidney Foundation: (800) 622-9010
- Cleveland Clinic: (<http://www.ccf.org/education/pated>)