

Urinary Tract Infections Fact Sheet

1. **What is a urinary tract infection?** – A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection that involves any part of the urinary tract, including the kidneys, bladder and urethra. It is usually caused by exposure of the urinary tract to a fecal organism such as *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), but also may be caused by other organisms.
2. **What are the symptoms of urinary tract infections?** – UTIs are usually identified by pain or burning in the lower abdomen, fever, burning during urination, an increase in the frequency of urination, or cloudy appearing urine. It can also lead to severe illness associated with back pain, fever, sepsis and decreased kidney function when the infection involves the kidney, a condition known as pyelonephritis.
3. **Who is at risk for urinary tract infections?** – Sexually active women and people who are hospitalized with urinary catheters. People with blockages in the urinary tract such as prostate enlargement, and women using certain types of birth control such as diaphragms or undergoing menopause are also at higher risk. In the United States, UTIs account for about 4 million ambulatory-care visits each year, representing about 1% of all outpatient visits. People with indwelling urinary catheters (drainage tubes inserted into the urinary bladder through the urethra) are at higher risk for UTIs because the catheter serves as a route for bacteria to enter normally sterile parts of the urinary tract.
4. **What is a catheter-associated UTI (CAUTI)?** – CAUTIs are urinary tract infections that occur due to the presence of a urinary catheter, usually while a person is hospitalized or receiving long-term care. CAUTIs account for more than 30 percent of healthcare associated infections reported by acute care hospitals in the United States.
5. **How are UTIs diagnosed?** – UTIs are diagnosed by analyzing a urine specimen in the laboratory, including looking for the presence of white blood cells and bacteria. Sometimes radiological studies can assist in the diagnosis.
6. **Is there treatment for urinary tract infections?** – Yes. UTIs are usually treated with antibiotics, although antibiotic resistance among *E. coli* and other organisms has been increasing, making treatment increasingly more difficult. Removal or changing of urinary catheters can also help to treat CAUTIs. Addressing the reasons for any blockage of the urinary tract will also reduce the likelihood of a UTI.
7. **Are urinary tract infections preventable?** – Yes. For non-hospitalized people, drinking plenty of liquids, wiping from front to back after using the bathroom, and emptying the bladder soon after intercourse can decrease risk of urinary tract infections by allowing bacteria to be flushed from the urinary tract before an infection can become established. For hospitalized patients, proper use, insertion, and maintenance of urinary catheters can help prevent CAUTIs. Patients should be sure to clean their hands before and after touching the

catheter, make sure the urine bag is below the level of the bladder, and to not tug, pull, twist or kink the catheter tubing.

8. **For more information about Urinary Tract Infections and CAUTIs:**
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/urinarytractinfections_t.htm
http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/ca_uti/cauti_faqs.html

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.