

# Urinary Tract Infection in Men

## What is urinary tract infection in men?

Urinary tract infection (UTI) is caused by bacteria in the urinary tract. The urinary tract includes the:

- kidneys
- ureters (the tubes draining urine from the kidneys to the bladder)
- bladder
- urethra (the tube that drains urine from the bladder)
- prostate gland.

Any or all of these parts of the urinary tract can get infected. Men rarely get urinary tract infections before age 50, but they are more common in older men. Men older than 50 may have an infection but no symptoms.

## How does it occur?

Normally the urinary tract does not have any bacteria or other organisms in it. Bacteria that cause UTI often spread from the rectum to the urethra and then to the bladder or kidneys. (The urethra is the small tube in the penis through which urine passes.) Sometimes bacteria spread from another part of the body through the bloodstream to the urinary tract. Urinary tract infection is less common in men than in women because the male urethra is long, making it difficult for bacteria to spread to the bladder. Urinary tract infection may be caused by a sexually transmitted disease. Sometimes a stone in the urinary tract blocks the flow of urine and causes an infection. In older men, an enlarged prostate can cause a urinary tract infection by keeping urine from draining out of the bladder completely. Infection might also be caused by the use of a catheter used to drain the bladder or by urethral stricture, which is a narrowing of the urethra by scar tissue from previous infections or surgical procedures. You may be more likely to have a UTI if you have diabetes or another medical problem that affects the immune system.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of urinary tract infection may include:

- urinating more often
- feeling an urgent need to urinate
- pain and discomfort (burning) when you urinate
- discharge from the penis (that is, a clear fluid or small amount of pus from the penis)
- abdominal pain
- fever or chills
- urine that looks cloudy or reddish
- back pain (infection of the prostate may cause low back pain while a kidney infection may cause mid-back pain).

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history. You may have lab tests of your urine and discharge from the urethra and prostate gland. For serious or repeated infections, you may

need:

- An intravenous pyelogram (IVP). An IVP is a special type of X-ray of the kidneys, ureters, and bladder.
- An ultrasound scan to look at the urinary tract.
- A cystoscopy. This is an exam of the inside of the urethra and bladder with a small lighted instrument. It is usually done by a specialist called a urologist.

## How is it treated?

UTIs are usually treated with antibiotics. Your healthcare provider may also prescribe a medicine called Pyridium to relieve burning and discomfort. If the infection is causing fever, pain, or vomiting or you have a severe kidney infection, you may need to stay at the hospital for treatment.

## How long will the effects last?

For most UTIs, the symptoms go away within 24 hours after you begin treatment. Take all of the medicine your healthcare provider prescribes, even after the symptoms go away. If you stop taking your medicine before the scheduled end of treatment, the infection may come back. Without treatment, the infection can last a long time. If it is not treated, the infection can permanently damage the bladder and kidneys, or it may spread to the blood. If the infection spreads to the blood, it can be fatal.

## How can I take care of myself?

- Follow your healthcare provider's treatment. Take all of the antibiotic that your healthcare provider prescribes, even when you feel better. Do not take medicine left over from previous prescriptions.
- Drink more fluids, especially water, to help flush bacteria from your system.
- If you have a fever: Take aspirin or acetaminophen to control the fever. Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome. Keep a daily record of your temperature.
- A hot water bottle or an electric heating pad on a low setting can help relieve cramps or lower abdominal or back pain. Keep a cloth between your skin and the hot water bottle or heating pad so that you don't burn your skin.
- Soaking in a tub for 20 to 30 minutes may help relieve any back or abdominal pain.
- Keep your follow-up appointment with your provider, if recommended.

Call your healthcare provider right away if:

- You keep having symptoms after taking an antibiotic for 2 days.
- Your symptoms get worse.
- You have a fever of 101.5° F (38.6° C) or higher.
- You have new vomiting.
- You have new pain in your side, back, or belly.
- You have any symptoms that worry you.

## How can I help prevent urinary tract infection?

You can help prevent UTIs if you:

- Drink lots of fluids every day.
- Don't wait to go to the bathroom when you feel the need to urinate.
- Empty your bladder completely when you urinate.
- Practice safe sex. Always use latex or polyurethane condoms.
- Urinate soon after sex.
- Keep your genital area clean. If you are uncircumcised, wash under the foreskin each time you take a bath or shower.

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