



Prevention of Urinary Tract Infections

Tips for UTI prevention:

- Wipe in the correct direction, from front to back, after using the bathroom
- Clean the bladder area first when washing to prevent contamination with bacteria .
- Empty the bladder at least every 4 hours
- Avoid the use of spermicidal jelly.
- Drink extra water and consider drinking cranberry juice (or taking cranberry pills). It cannot harm.
- Use an estrogen cream if postmenopausal.
- Take any medication as prescribed by a physician.

Most UTIs are ascending infections of bacteria that colonize the vaginal wall and eventually the urethra. From the urethra, the bacteria can travel upwards and infect the bladder (lower tract infection) or continue from the bladder up the ureters and infect the kidneys themselves (upper tract infection).

Hygiene

Wipe front to back. Always wipe from the front to the back after using the bathroom. Do not try to reach from behind because germs from the rectum can be transferred to the hand and tissue. After bowel movements, clean the area around the anus gently, wiping from front to back. Never wipe twice with the same tissue. Any wiping motion that starts nearer to the rectum and then approaches the bladder-opening area moves potentially pathogenic bacteria closer to the bladder.

Take **showers** and avoid prolonged baths. Bath water may fairly quickly become contaminated by the bather's own skin flora. Sitting in a tub allows bacteria to reach the bladder opening area.

Wash properly, front to back, in the shower or bath. Rinse well and remember to wipe correctly from front to back. Douches have no proven benefit in preventing bladder infections.

Use tampons for periods. Tampons are advised during the menstrual period rather than sanitary napkins or pads because they keep the bladder opening area drier than a sanitary pad, thereby limiting bacterial overgrowth.

Extremely effective is avoiding long intervals between urinating. Try to **empty the bladder at least every 4 hours** during the day while awake, even if the need or urge to void is absent. When feeling the need to empty the bladder, do not try to hold it until a more convenient time or place.

Clothing

Do not wear tight-fitting undergarments made of non-breathing materials. With such fabrics, accumulating moisture builds up. This leads to maceration of the skin and bacterial over growth adjacent to the opening of the bladder. Cotton underwear for general use is suggested.

Diet

Drink more water. Start with 1 extra glass with each meal. If the urine appears any darker than a very pale yellow, this means not enough liquid is being ingested; increase the fluid intake.

Cranberry juice and cranberry pills have unproven benefit in reducing urinary infections. They appear to be most effective in younger women.

Activities

When engaging in physical activity and exercise, make sure to empty the bladder frequently and drink plenty of water and other fluids. Take special precautions after sexual activity; such activity may also increase risk because it can introduce bacteria into the bladder area. The bladder should be emptied after intercourse; drink 2 extra glasses of water.

Avoid the use of spermicidal jelly. This kills sperm as well as normal vaginal flora, which are extremely important in suppressing colonization with pathogenic bacteria.