



Lee Dennis, ND 12616 SE Stark Street Portland, OR 97233 (503) 408-0790

Urinary Tract Infections

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is any infection that occurs in the urinary system including the kidneys, ureters (tubes extending from kidneys to bladder), bladder or urethra (tube extending out of the body from the bladder). Bladder infections and UTIs are generally referring to the same thing, although a UTI can include other parts of the urinary system. UTIs are generally more common in women than in men due to structural differences, though either gender can get them.

Symptoms

The symptoms of a UTI generally involve pain and burning with urination, increased urgency to urinate and increased frequency of urination. One may also notice a brown or pink discoloration of urine due to the presence of blood or cloudy urine due to the presence of bacteria and white blood cells. In more severe infections, one may develop a fever and flank or back pain. If you are having any of the above symptoms, please call your doctor.

Causes and Prevention

UTIs occur when bacteria (or rarely fungi, viruses or parasites) invade the urinary tract through the urethra. The most common bacteria found in UTIs is E. coli. Risk factors for UTIs include the following:

- Sexual intercourse
- New sex partner in the past year
- Diaphragm and spermicide use
- Antibiotic use
- History of UTIs in family
- History of recurrent UTIs
- First UTI at an early age
- Prostate enlargement
- Recent surgery or catheterization

A number of factors can help to prevent UTIs. Drinking sufficient water is key to preventing and treating UTIs. Water helps to flush out the urinary system and prevent bacteria from gaining a foothold. Wiping front-to-back after urination or defecation can also help prevent infection by moving vaginal and fecal bacteria away from the urethra. Avoiding douching and not delaying urination can also be helpful. You may have heard of cranberry juice or extract for treating UTIs. Well, some research has shown that cranberry extract may be more effective than cranberry juice in preventing infection. If using juice, however, be sure to use pure cranberry juice without added sugars.

Complications

Most urinary tract infections are relatively benign involving only lower parts of the urinary tract including the bladder and urethra. They are treated easily with herbal supplements, homeopathics or antibiotics and resolve relatively quickly. In untreated cases or in resistant infections, a simple UTI of the bladder may develop into a more severe infection involving the kidneys, called pyelonephritis. Kidney infections can be life threatening and could lead to sepsis (an infection in the blood). If a UTI develops into a kidney infection, symptoms will likely include a fever and flank or back pain. If you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor immediately.