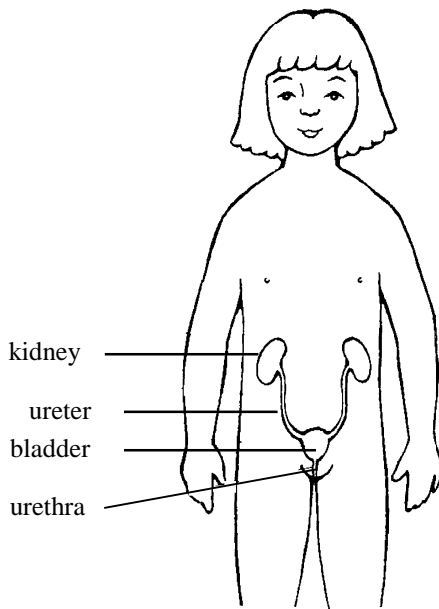


Urinary tract infection

What is a urinary tract infection?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection of the bladder or kidneys. It is one of the most common bacterial diseases in children. Girls are more likely to get a UTI than boys, especially after the first few months of life, because they have a short urethra (yu-reeth-rah). The urethra is the tube for urination, leading out from the bladder. Girls ages 2 to 6 are at the highest risk. Risk also increases if the child is born with a urinary tract problem, or has trouble with toilet training.



What causes UTIs?

UTIs are often caused by bacteria (germs) that back up into the urethra from the skin. The most common bacteria are found in the bowel. For this reason, **always wipe from front to back** after going to the bathroom or during diaper changes.

What are the signs of a UTI?

Signs of a UTI vary for different ages. Fever and trouble with urinating are common; however, in young children the signs may be unclear. Watch for these possible signs:

Infants

- fever
- irritability
- colicky or cramping signs (crying and flexing legs)
- feeding problems
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- diaper rash
- dribbling of urine or constantly wet diaper
- urine has a strange color or smell

Toddlers and young children

- fever
- crying or straining with urination
- refusing to urinate
- stopping urination and having trouble starting again
- urine is cloudy or has a bad smell
- a child who is usually dry may start having wetting accidents

Older children, teens, and adults:

- fever
- pain or burning during urination
- urgent or frequent urination
- pain in the lower back, flank (sides of the low back), abdomen (belly), thighs, or groin
- urine is cloudy or has a bad smell

How should I care for my child?

Make an appointment for a urine test to check for germs. If the test is positive, an antibiotic will be prescribed.

Treat a UTI with a prescribed antibiotic.

If it is not treated, the symptoms may go away but the germs will stay. The germs may back up through the ureters into the kidneys. A kidney infection can cause permanent kidney damage. **Give the antibiotic for as long as the doctor tells you.** Meanwhile, make another appointment for about 3 days after the antibiotic is due to run out. Your child will need another urine test to be sure that the infection is gone.

X-rays of the kidneys and bladder may also be needed to check for anatomy problems that may have caused a UTI. Discuss this with your doctor. The X-ray may be scheduled with your follow-up visit or at another time.

These health practices help to treat and may prevent a UTI:

- Encourage drinking **lots of fluids**. Avoid caffeine (cola, chocolate, coffee, tea), as it irritates the urinary tract.
- After toilet use and when bathing or showering, always **wipe from front to back** to keep germs from the bowel away from the urethra. Avoid rubbing back and forth. Teach your child how to do this correctly.
- Showers are better than baths, if your child is old enough.
- No bubble bath, shampoo, or perfumed soap in the bath water. They can irritate the sensitive skin in the area and help germs get in the bladder. Wash your child's bottom with plain water.

- Don't let the child sit in the bath longer than 15 minutes. Have your child urinate after the bath.
- Change diapers often. Leaving a wet or dirty diaper on gives the germs more chance to go up the urethra.
- Have children change underpants daily. Underpants should be made of cotton and should not be too tight.
- Teach children to urinate often—every 2 to 4 hours—so the bladder doesn't get too full. Remind them to go to the bathroom **before** beginning activities or going where bathrooms are not handy (such as car trips or playing outside).
- Do not use fabric softener dryer sheets; they can irritate the skin.
- Avoid constipation.
- If urinating is painful, have your child sit in a bathtub of plain warm water and urinate into the water.
- Sexually active females should urinate as soon as possible after intercourse to flush out germs that may have entered the urethra during sex.

When should I call the clinic?

- symptoms continue or get worse after taking the antibiotics for 2 days
- problems with the antibiotics
- vomiting
- urine looks bloody or brown
- if any new symptoms develop

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the clinic.