

**Sandusky County Board Of MRDD
Health and Safety Alert #01-09-07**

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

What are urinary tract infections?

A urinary tract infection is a common infection that is caused by bacteria in parts of the urinary tract, such as kidneys, bladder or urethra. Women are more likely to get urinary tract infections than men are.

What causes a UTI?

Usually a UTI is caused by bacteria that can also live in the digestive tract, in the vagina or around the urethra, which is at the entrance to the urinary tract. Most often these bacteria enter the urethra and travel to the bladder and kidneys. Usually your body removes the bacteria and you have no symptoms. However some people, including women and older people of both sexes, seem to be prone to infection.

What are the symptoms of a urinary tract infection?

Not everyone with a urinary tract infection has symptoms, but most people have at least some symptoms. Signs of a urinary tract infection include:

- Pain or stinging when urinating
- Needing to urinate often or really badly, even if you have little urine to pass
- Urine that smells bad or looks milky, cloudy or reddish in color
- Pain in the lower belly (abdomen) or back
- Feeling tired, shaky or having a fever

How are UTIs treated?

Once it is determined that your symptoms have been caused by an infection, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic. Antibiotics can kill the bacteria causing the infection. The antibiotic prescribed will depend on the type of bacteria found.

For simple infections, you'll be given three (3) days of therapy. For more serious infections, you'll be given a prescription for seven (7) days or longer. Be sure to follow your instructions carefully and completely. If you have any allergies to drugs, be sure your doctor knows what they are.

How can I prevent a UTI?

Changing some of your daily habits may help you avoid UTIs.

- Drink lots of fluid to flush the bacteria from your system. Water is best. Try for six (6) to eight (8) glasses a day.
- Drink cranberry juice or take vitamin C. Both increase the acid in your urine so bacteria can't grow easily. Cranberry juice also makes your bladder wall slippery, so bacteria can't stick to it.
- Urinate frequently and go when you first feel the urge. Bacteria can grow when urine stays in the bladder too long.
- Urinate shortly after sex. This can flush away bacteria that might have entered your urethra during sex. Drinking a glass of water will also help.
- After using the toilet, always wipe from front to back, especially after a bowel movement.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting clothes so that air can keep the area dry. Avoid tight-fitting jeans and nylon underwear which trap moisture and can help bacteria grow.
- For women, the type of birth control used may lead to UTIs by increasing bacteria growth. If you have trouble with UTIs, consider contacting your physician to modify your birth control method.