



Because the organs of the urinary tract are connected, infection can easily spread from one organ to the next.

Urinary tract infection, also called bladder infection, is a common health problem for women, young girls, and some infant boys. Early symptoms may include:

- burning during urination
- pain in the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder)
- pain in the lower stomach
- repeated urge to pee without being able to pass much urine
- milky or cloudy urine

Urinary infections are caused by many bacteria, which are usually found in the intestines. Women are more likely to get the infection than men because they have shorter urethras. As women get older, they tend to get more of these infections.

Other factors that may increase your risk of urinary tract infection include:

- sexual intercourse
- using a diaphragm
- wearing tight jeans or pants
- bike riding
- not going to the toilet very often
- perfumed soaps and powders
- diabetes
- pregnancy

Prevention

You can lower the likelihood of infection.

- Drink more fluids; water is best.
- Urinate often.
- If you are a woman, wipe from front to back after going to the toilet.
- Avoid frequent douching. Do not use vaginal hygiene products, such as deodorants.
- Wash the genital area once a day with plain water or mild soap. Rinse well and dry thoroughly.
- If you have frequent urinary infections, pee right after having sex. Drinking extra water after sex may also help prevent infection.
- Wear cotton underwear, cotton-lined pantyhose, and loose clothing.
- Drinking cranberry juice may protect against infection.

Home treatment

The organs of the urinary tract are connected so infection can easily spread from one organ to the next. Try these suggestions when you think you have symptoms.

- Drink as much water as you can in the first 24 hours after symptoms appear. This will help get the bacteria out of the bladder.

- Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- A hot bath may help reduce pain and itching.
- Check the genital area and your temperature twice a day. Fever may be a sign of a more serious infection.
- Avoid intercourse until symptoms get better.
- Drink cranberry juice.
- Urinate when you feel the need.
- In young girls, abdominal pain or vaginal burning and redness may be an allergy to bubble bath or soap.

Contact your doctor or other medical professional if your symptoms do not go away or get worse.

Diagnosis

Your doctor will test a sample of your urine for bacteria. If your doctor prescribes antibiotics, take all of them as prescribed to treat the infection completely.

Blood in the urine

A urinary tract infection can cause blood to appear in the urine. Blood in the urine can be a sign of a serious illness in both women and men. Be sure to tell your doctor or other health care professional if you see blood in your urine.

Eating foods such as beets, blackberries, and other foods with red food coloring can temporarily color the urine.

Call Kaiser Permanente if . . .

Painful urination occurs with any of the following symptoms:

- chills and/or fever above 101°F
- failure to urinate when you feel the urge
- lower back pain just below the rib cage
- blood or pus in the urine
- vaginal discharge that's not normal
- nausea or vomiting
- symptoms do not improve after 24 hours of home treatment
- you are pregnant or have diabetes, and have symptoms of a urinary tract infection
- you think a child has a urinary tract infection

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at **kp.org**. Here you'll find the health encyclopedia, which offers more in-depth information on this and many other topics.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Visit your local Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.