

## Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

### What is a UTI?

A urinary tract infection (UTI for short) is an infection in your bladder. It is also called cystitis (sis-TIE-tis). If you have a bladder infection, you may feel pain or burning when urinating or have an unusually strong urge to urinate. You may also urinate more often, see blood in your urine, and have pain in your lower stomach.

### What causes a UTI?

Bladder infections usually happen in healthy women of reproductive age, but they may occur in anyone. It is normal to have bacteria that live around your urethra (yoo-REE-thruh), which is where the urine comes out. These bacteria usually are not harmful. However, sometimes they get into your bladder and may cause an infection.

### What should I do if I think I have a UTI?

You can drink more fluids and take over-the-counter pain medicine (such as ibuprofen) to relieve discomfort. You can also call your doctor. Most doctors will be able to tell you over the phone if you likely have an infection.

Your doctor may tell you what to do to feel better, or they may ask you to come into the office to examine you and get a urine sample.

See your doctor if your symptoms get worse or

you have a fever, nausea, vomiting, back pain, or you do not feel well.

### How will my doctor treat my infection?

*Women:* Your doctor can prescribe an antibiotic, although this is not always necessary. Many women feel better within three to four days without taking antibiotics. With antibiotics, you will probably feel better within three days. You and your doctor can talk about which is the best option for you.

*Men:* Your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic for you to take for at least seven days.

*Nonbinary or transgender people:* Your doctor will treat your infection according to your current anatomy, regardless of your assigned sex at birth.

### Can I do something to prevent another UTI?

Drinking plenty of water or other fluids and using cranberry products, such as juice or tablets, may help.

### Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/uti.html>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases  
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/urologic-diseases/bladder-infection-uti-in-adults>

February 2024



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Adapted with permission from Colgan R, Williams M. Treating a bladder infection (cystitis)[patient information]. *Am Fam Physician*. 2011;84(7):778.

**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians.**

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2024 by the American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.