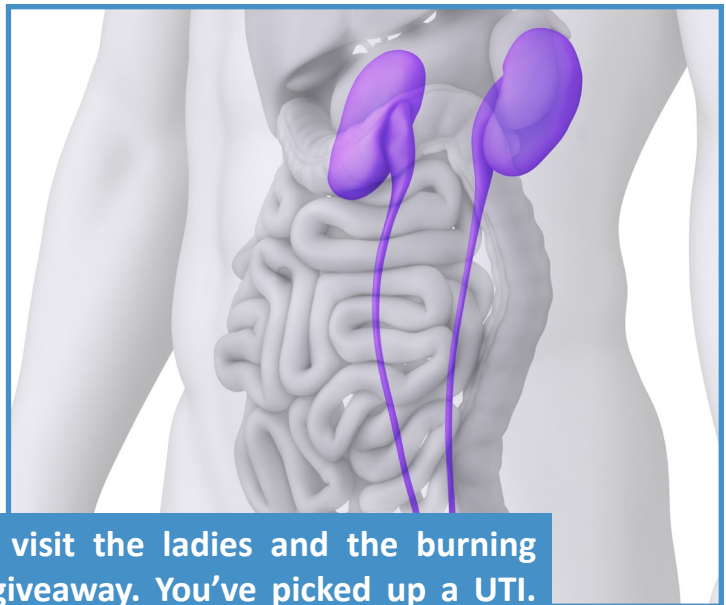


Dealing with a urinary tract infection



The constant feeling of needing to visit the ladies and the burning sensation when you get there is a giveaway. You've picked up a UTI. Again. Read on to learn more about how you can treat this condition.

What is a Urinary Tract Infection?

A UTI is an infection of the urinary tract, called cystitis when the infection is in the bladder and pyelonephritis when the infection is in the kidneys. Both men and women can suffer from this condition, but it is more common in women because the urethra is shorter, making the distance from the opening of the vagina to the bladder easier for bacteria to travel. Pregnant ladies, the elderly and those who suffer from diabetes are also more at risk of UTI's.

Risk factors that increase the risk of UTIs

Female gender: UTIs are rarely seen in boys and young men. In women, though, the rate of UTIs gradually increases with age. Scientists are not sure why women have more urinary infections than men. One factor may be that a woman's urethra is short (men have far longer urethras) allowing bacteria quick access to the bladder. Also, a woman's urethral opening is near sources of bacteria from the anus and vagina. For many women, sexual intercourse seems to trigger an infection, although the reasons for this are unclear.

Obstruction: Any abnormality of the urinary tract that obstructs the flow of urine (a kidney stone, for example) sets the stage for an infection. An enlarged prostate gland can also slow the flow of urine, thus raising the risk of infection.

Catheters: A common source of infection is long-term catheters, or tubes, placed in the bladder. A person who cannot void or who is unconscious or critically ill often needs a catheter that stays in place for a long time. Some people, especially the elderly or those with nervous system disorders (e.g. paraplegics, quadriplegics) who lose bladder control, may need a catheter for life. Bacteria on the catheter can infect the bladder, so hospital staff take special care to keep the catheter sterile and remove it as soon as possible.

Immune suppression: People with diabetes have a higher risk of a UTI because of changes in the immune system. Any disorder that suppresses the immune system raises the risk of a urinary infection. **Abnormalities:** UTIs may occur in infants who are born with abnormalities of the urinary tract, which sometimes need to be corrected with surgery.

How are UTI's treated?

Mild infections can disappear without any treatment but usually doctors recommend antibiotics to avoid the infection spreading to the kidneys. Remember to always complete the course when taking antibiotics.

When cystitis or UTI is promptly and correctly treated, complications are very rare. However, should the infection be neglected, kidney damage and even kidney failure can result.