



SELF-CARE for Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can happen anywhere in the urinary system (which includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra – see figure), but they are most often caused by bacteria (germs) that get into the bladder.

If you experience pain, burning, or stinging when passing urine; develop a frequent urge to urinate; and/or have pressure or cramping in the lower abdomen, you may have a lower UTI -- also known as a bladder infection or cystitis. If you also have fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, and/or pain in your lower back or side, you may have a kidney infection -- also known as pyelonephritis, a less common but more serious UTI. (See also Vaginal Infections and Menstrual Symptoms, <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/Women'sHealthPortal-SelfCare.aspx>).

This document provides basic information on prevention of urinary tract infections and when to seek care. For 24/7 support and guidance, use the Military Health Systems (MHS) Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874-2273, select option 1).

Self-Care Measures

The following self-care measures may help prevent a UTI.

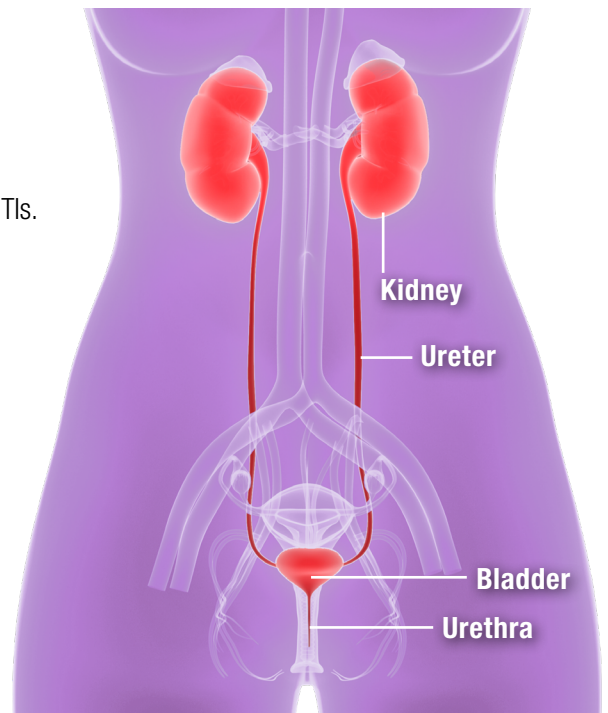
- » Don't hold it. The longer urine stays in the bladder, the more time bacteria have to grow.
- » Urinate before and after sex.
- » Wipe front to back to minimize transmittal of bacteria.
- » Stay well hydrated – drink plenty of water.
- » Take showers instead of baths.
- » Opt for alternative birth control methods if you use spermicides and often get UTIs.
- » Routinely clean the genital area but avoid douching, sprays, or powders.
- » Wear underpants with a cotton crotch and avoid tight-fitting pants, which trap moisture.
- » Change out of wet bathing suits and workout clothes promptly.

Contact Your Primary Care Provider if You Have:

- » Pain, burning, and/or stinging when urinating.
- » Frequency and/or urgency.
- » Mild lower abdominal pain.
- » Cloudy and/or bad smelling urine.
- » Fever >100.5 or greater.

Seek Immediate Care if You Have:

- » A full feeling in your bladder but are unable to urinate.
- » Cold, pale, and clammy skin; nausea and vomiting; and feel too weak to stand.
- » A fever and pain in your side or lower back.
- » Blood in your urine (a dark amber color).
- » Severe pain in your side or lower back



About Cranberry

Though consuming daily probiotics (good bacteria) or daily cranberry supplements/juice are sometimes suggested, evidence is still limited. For some these may help reduce risk, but should not be used in lieu of treatment if symptoms develop.

Women's Health Portal: <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/default.aspx>



SOURCES

- <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/uti.html>
- <https://medlineplus.gov/urinarytractinfections.html>
- <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/urinary-tract-infections>
- <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/cranberry>



Army Public Health

TA-685-0222
MAR 2022

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.