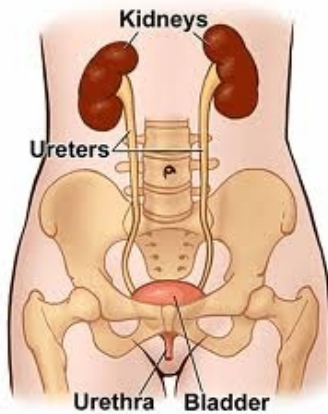


## URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)

Written by U.S Immigration News

Wednesday, 02 March 2011 03:16 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 March 2011 23:59

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Urinary Tract infection occurs when bacteria (germs) get into the pathway (tract) urine travels through before it gets out of the body. Urine is made in the kidneys (bean shaped organs located at the mid-back, just below the ribs) and travels through the ureters (straw-like structures) that terminate in the bladder (balloon-shaped storage) before it is finally excreted out of the body through the narrow urethra. Normally urine is sterile (germ-free). Bacteria can be introduced into the tract through the urethra (the place where we urinate from). The bacteria travel up into the bladder, and if not well-treated can ascend to the kidney and cause an infection called cystitis and pyelonephritis (infection in the kidney).

*Image courtesy of Mayo Clinic*

Ques: How does UTI present?

Ans: Presentations include but are not limited to discomfort when urinating (pain or burning sensation); frequent urination, feeling of incomplete bladder emptying and pain just above the pubic bone (suprapubic pain). With infection getting to the kidneys, there may be fever, chills, vomiting and pain in the flank (mid-back just below the ribs where the kidneys are located).

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Ques: Is it true that change in color of urine means I have UTI?

Ans: Cloudy and smelly urine may indicate UTI. At other times urine may have a red tinge, which may indicate presence of blood in the urine.

Ques: Does UTI occur more frequently in some people than others?

Ans: Women are more prone to UTI than men. This is related to the shortness of the urethra and closeness to the anal area, making it easy for bacteria to contaminate the urine from stool. Pregnant women and people with diabetes are also more likely to have UTI than others.

Ques: My wife thinks I have been cheating because she frequently has a burning sensation after we have had sex? I have not cheated on her. Does having sex make you have UTI?

Ans: During sexual activity it is easy to traumatize the female urethra. The urethra when irritated, presents with discomfort on urination, which may be difficult to differentiate from UTI. Aside from that, repeated movement makes it easy for bacteria to travel up to the bladder and cause UTI. That is why women are encouraged to urinate after sexual activity to wash out the urethral passage. In rare cases women who have recurrent UTI after sexual activity may be given prophylactic treatment.

Ques: Should a man be concerned if he has UTI?

Ans: Men can also have UTI, but not as frequently as women. Recurrent UTI in a man needs to be investigated to find the cause. It may be that there is a blockage in the urinary tract that is slowing down the flow of urine and making it easy for bacteria to grow in the tract. One of the most common causes is an enlarged prostate. Recurrent UTI in a man may therefore be a pointer to a more serious underlying disease.

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Ques: Some people say you should drink cranberry juice if you have UTI, does it help?

Ans: Cranberry juice is said to contain substances that can help fight bacteria to a certain extent, exactly to what extent has yet to be fully proven. However, it may not be able to clear an infection with complicated UTI.

Ques: How can I know if I have UTI?

Ans: Apart from the symptoms, your doctor can perform a simple test in the office using a urine dip stick. If need be, the urine can be sent to the laboratory for further analysis. Complicated UTI needs testing.

Ques: How is UTI treated?

Ans: Antibiotics are the mainstay of treatment. You should also drink a lot of water to flush the bladder.

Ques: What are some of the things people can do to prevent UTI?

Ans: Drinking a lot of water helps to flush out the urinary tract. If you need to urinate do not hold urine, so as not to create a stagnant flow. Practice simple hygienic cleaning methods when wiping. Always wipe from the front to the back, not the other way around, so as not to transfer bacteria to the urethra area.

**Take Home Message :** UTI is more common in women than men. It is easily treated. However, recurrent UTI warrants further investigation. UTI involving the kidney (pyelonephritis) needs to be treated well so that damage is not done to the kidney. Remember that sexually transmitted infections can present like symptoms of simple UTI in men. If you have symptoms of UTI after having unprotected sex seek medical advice

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The health columns are for educational purposes only and are not intended to replace the advice of your doctor.