Urinary Tract Infections

What is a UTI?

Bacteria that cause urinary tract infections are often spread from the rectal/anal area to the urethra and then into the bladder or kidneys.

These bacteria can cause:
- Cystitis (bladder infection)
- Pyelonephritis (kidney infection)
- Urethritis (inflammation of the urethra, the tube that drains urine from the bladder)
- Urethral syndrome (painful urination without evidence of bacterial infection in the urine)

Who are at risk for UTIs?

Women are more likely to develop UTIs because their urethras are short, making it easy for bacteria to spread to the bladder.

UTIs are more likely to occur in women who:
- Are newly sexually active or have a new sexual partner
- Are past menopause
- Are pregnant
- Have a history of diabetes, sickle-cell anemia, stroke, kidney stones, or any illness that causes the bladder to be paralyzed or to fail to empty completely

Signs and symptoms of UTIs

- Pain and/or burning with urination
- Urgency or frequency of urination
- Blood or pus in urine
- Strong smelling urine
- Pain in lower pelvis, stomach, lower back, or on sides just above waist level
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Chills, fever, fatigue, nausea or vomiting
- Urinating frequently during the night

Diagnosing UTIs

- Laboratory analysis of urine (called a UA or Urine Analysis)
- Personal history of signs and symptoms
- Physical exam including a pelvic exam, if necessary
- For person who suffers from frequent UTIs, further testing is usually ordered

Treatment

- Antibiotics for 3-10 days depending on severity of infection
- Increasing water and juice intake to more than 8 eight oz. glasses per day
- Tylenol or aspirin for fever and backache
  - See a doctor if fever is over 100 degrees
- Heating pad or hot water bottle applied to lower abdomen or back

**How can I help prevent a UTI?**

- After a bowel movement (BM), wipe yourself from front to back to prevent germs in the stool from getting near your urethra.
- While cleansing after a BM, use a baby diaper wipe to finish cleansing the anal area. This helps eliminate surface bacteria. Men should do this also.
- Keep the genital area clean.
- Change underclothing daily.
- Wear 100 percent cotton or cotton-crotch underclothing.
- Empty your bladder completely when you urinate.
- Urinate soon after sexual intercourse.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid using strong soaps, douches, antiseptic creams, and feminine hygiene products (sprays, powders) in the genital area.