

Wellness Education

Reducing Urinary Tract Infections






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Professional

Setting up your routine is essential for taking care of your bladder health. Even more important, sticking to your routine helps prevent bladder (and possibly kidney) complications.

Many people who practice intermittent self-catheterization get urinary tract infections (UTIs). Some people may have an occasional UTI, and some have frequent UTI episodes. An infection can not only be challenging, it can affect quality of life, both physically and emotionally.

What guidelines should I follow to avoid getting a UTI?

There are a number of things you can do that might help you prevent recurring urinary tract infections.

-  • Regularly empty your bladder
-  • Discard catheter after each use
-  • Drink adequate fluids
-  • Use good hand washing techniques
-  • Take all medication as prescribed by your physician

Each of the steps above may seem like common sense, but each step is critical in helping you avoid a UTI.

How does a urinary tract infection develop?

When you self-catheterize, organisms from improper hand washing, or bacteria near the urethral opening, can be introduced into the urinary tract. The bacteria can stay on the surface of the catheter and travel through the urethra up into the bladder. That is why it is so important to:

- Thoroughly wash hands before passing your catheter
- Thoroughly clean around the urethral opening
- Use a new, sterile, well-lubricated catheter each time to minimize trauma and bleeding during insertion and withdrawal

Keeping the bladder empty reduces the amount of time urine sits in the bladder. The longer urine stays in the bladder, the more time there is for any bacteria in the bladder to multiply. This is why it's so important to follow your physician's advice about catheterizing according to schedule (it's often 4-6 times per day). An individualized plan for you will be determined by you physician, taking into account your intake, output and medical history.

Tip: Every once in a while, measure the amount of urine you empty. It should be no more than around 500 mL. If you empty more than 500 mL, ask your physician if you should catheterize more often.

Why is it important to drink adequate fluids?

Bacteria are less likely to grow if you are well hydrated and if you regularly empty your bladder as directed by your physician. The type of fluids you drink may also be important: urine that has a slightly acidic pH may help you avoid infections. If you have frequent UTIs, ask your physician or clinician to check your urine pH. Certain beverages and supplements (such as cranberry juice or extract, or vitamin C) may make the urine more acidic. Always check with your physician, however, before taking any supplements or over-the-counter medications. Your physician may advise against taking these products for medical reasons (for instance, they may react with other medications you're taking).

How do I know if I have a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

The presence of bacteria in your urine does not always mean that you have an infection. Depending on your symptoms, your physician may or may not decide to treat you with antibiotics.

There are however, steps you can take to prevent an infection if you begin to notice changes in your urine:

- Drink more fluids (as long as you do not have any medical conditions that limit your fluid intake)
- Make sure you are catheterizing the maximum number of times recommended to you—this helps keep your bladder empty
- Talk to your physician first, but it may be beneficial to take vitamin C tablets, cranberry extract tablets or cranberry juice to help acidify your urine

If I have frequent UTIs, what could my physician do to help?

Your physician or clinician may need to assess other factors, and urine or blood tests are often a first step. Your clinician may ask about constipation and/or incontinence, how much fluid you drink and your schedule for catheterizing. People who have chronic UTIs may also need to see a urologist, since there might be underlying conditions that increase the likelihood of infections. It is important to evaluate all the ways you manage your bladder health, including the type of catheter you use.

Symptoms of a UTI may include:

- Fever, chills
- Increased frequency of urination
- Flank pain
- Burning sensation while voiding
- Urgency or unexpected urine leakage
- Increased spasms of legs, abdomen and /or bladder
- Pain above the pubic bone area
- Headache
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Feeling poorly
- Increased mucus in your urine
- Cloudy and strong smelling urine (unrelated to foods that can cause urine odor)
- Mental confusion (especially in an older person)
- Blood in the urine (enough blood to make the urine the color of cranberry juice)

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your physician immediately.

Some final comments

Leading an active lifestyle is very important, both physically and emotionally. It is also important that you continue to take good care of your bladder. To reduce or eliminate the possibility of UTIs, practice good hygiene and adhere to your catheterization schedule. Then, take time to also enjoy all that life offers you.

Learning to do IC is a simple procedure and easy to learn for most people with one teaching session. It can be a little more challenging, especially if you have vision problems, limited hand dexterity or other physical challenges. However, it's very likely that you can still master the technique—and you'll rely on those skills for many years to come. Talk to your clinician or physician for suggestions, and don't get discouraged. Once you master intermittent self-catheterization as a part of your bladder management routine, it will offer much more freedom to your schedule—and your lifestyle.

If you have any questions regarding intermittent self-catheterization, product usage, or availability, please contact a **Coloplast Care Advisor** at **1-866-293-6349**, or at casupport@coloplast.com. you can also visit the **Coloplast Care website** for tips around establishing a healthy intermittent catheterization routine at www.coloplastcare.ca

Coloplast does not practice medicine. The recommendations and information in this material are not medical advice. Contact your healthcare professional for personal medical advice or diagnosis.
IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911.

Enroll in Coloplast® Care to read more about UTIs, access how-to IC videos, and learn more about how the bladder works.



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