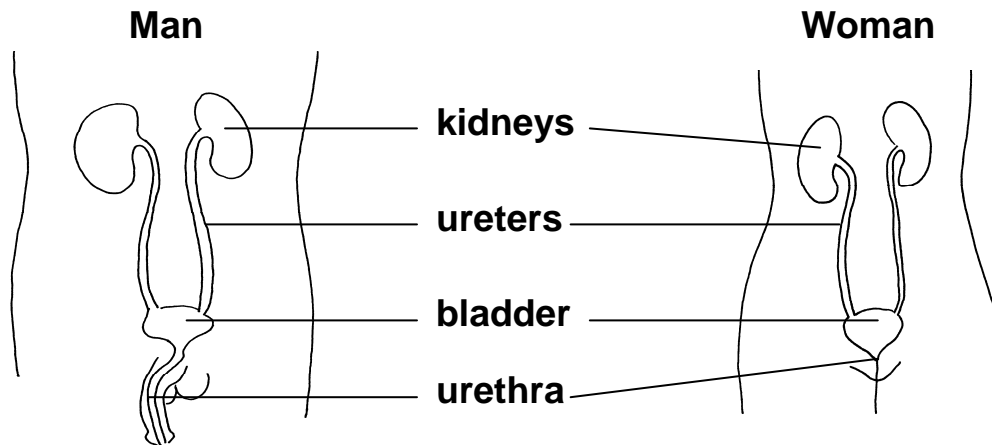

Lower Urinary Tract Infections

What is a lower urinary tract infection?

The urinary system is made up of many parts:

- the kidneys make urine
- the ureters drain urine from the kidneys to the bladder
- the bladder stores urine
- the urethra or tube the urine comes through when you urinate

A lower urinary tract infection or LUTI is an infection in the bladder.



What causes a lower urinary tract infection?

Bacteria or germs cause this type of infection. There are many causes of urinary tract infections. Some of these are:

- not being able to empty the bladder completely
- concentrated urine due to not drinking enough and this allows bacteria to grow
- a decreased ability to fight an infection due to a medical problem, poor diet or stress
- irritation of the urethra and/or the bladder from an indwelling catheter

Bubblebaths, perfumed soap, deodorant sprays, baby wipes and wet pants or pads may also irritate the urethra.

Why do women get more urinary tract infections than men?

A woman's urethra is shorter than a man's and close to the rectum. If a woman wipes from back to front, instead of front to back, bacteria can move to the urethra from the rectum causing infection.

Also, the natural lubrication that helps prevent infection in women dries up after menopause.

Since a woman has a shorter urethra, frequent sexual activity may irritate the urethra.

What are the signs of urinary tract infection?

There are many signs of urinary tract infection. However, some people do not have any signs.

Some signs are:

- cloudy, foul smelling urine
- urinating often which is called urinary frequency
- feeling like having to urinate right away which is called urgency
- a burning feeling when urinating
- pain in the lower abdomen or lower back
- a low fever
- mental changes such as confusion
- feeling unwell

What tests are done?

A urine test is sent to a lab to see what type of bacteria is causing the infection. The type of medication used to treat the infections depends on the bacteria causing the problem.

You may be referred to see a member of the health care team to help you. An Urologist is a doctor who helps people with problems in the urinary system. A Nurse Continence Advisor can also help and teach you about preventing future infections.

You may have a physical exam and more tests to decide the best treatment for you.

What are some ways to prevent urinary tract infections and irritation?

- Empty your bladder every 2 to 3 hours.
- If you dribble or leak, wash after you urinate when you can.
- If you feel your bladder may not be empty, wait a few minutes and try to urinate again.
- If you use pads for incontinence, change them when needed.
- Urinate after sexual intercourse.
- Women should always wipe from front to back.
- Avoid bubble baths, perfumed soaps, feminine hygiene sprays and baby wipes.
- Wear underwear with a white cotton crotch and avoid tight fitting pants.
- Drink 6 glasses of water a day. If you have heart or kidney problems, talk to your doctor or ask to talk to a dietitian about the amount of fluid you can have.
- Do not drink more than 1 to 2 glasses of cranberry juice each day. Cranberry capsules can be another choice to cranberry juice.

For questions or concerns . . .

Contact your family doctor.

