Urinary Tract Infection (UTI): Prevention

The body gets rid of liquid waste products through the urinary system. To keep the kidneys working well, it is important to protect this system from infection. Picture 1 shows the urinary system inside the body.

How the urinary system works

The blood in the body passes through the kidneys. The kidneys filter the liquid waste products out of the blood (Picture 1). This liquid (urine) passes through the ureters and into the bladder. When the bladder is full, the child has an urge to urinate (pass water or pee). The urine flows down the urethra and leaves the body.

A urinary tract infection happens when bacteria (germs) enter the urethra and grow.

How to prevent urinary tract infection

- Teach your child to go to the bathroom and empty the urinary bladder as soon as the urge is felt, rather than trying to hold the urine in.
- Have him or her drink plenty of liquids, especially water, (6 to 8 glasses a day) to help "flush out" wastes from the urinary system.
- Children should be taught to keep their bottoms clean and dry and to change their underwear every day.
- Bubble bath products, detergents, shampoos or shower gels should not be used in bath water. They can irritate the opening to the urethra.
- Do not use colored or scented toilet paper.

Special tips for girls

Girls need to take special care to prevent urinary tract infections. Because their urethra is shorter, bacteria do not need to travel as far to get into the bladder and grow.

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Special tips for girls, continued

- After using the toilet, your child should always wipe from *front to back*. If this is not done, bacteria from stool (bowel movement) can get into the urethra and cause an infection.

- If your child has an accident (soils or wets her underpants), her bottom should be cleaned and the underpants changed as soon as possible.

- It is best for your child to wear underpants made of cotton rather than a synthetic. Cotton allows the air to flow more freely. This helps to keep the area dry. Germs do not grow as fast in a dry area as they do in a moist area.

- After swimming, your child should change into dry clothes rather than staying in a wet suit.

When to call the doctor

Call your child's doctor if any of the following occurs:

- A change in your child’s urine:
  - It becomes red or changes to a dark color.
  - It has a strong or foul smell.

- Your child has:
  - pain or difficulty in urinating
  - sudden or frequent need to urinate
  - pain in the lower back just below the ribs
  - chills or a fever over 101°F by mouth
  - abdominal (belly) pain
  - bed-wetting again or has accidents during the day after being potty trained

Medicine

Antibiotic medicine is usually prescribed to treat a urinary tract infection. It is very important to take all the medicine as ordered, even after starting to feel better. When antibiotics are not used correctly (such as taking too much, missing doses or not finishing a prescription), some bacteria can develop resistance. Resistance can make infections very hard to treat. Sometimes they cannot be treated at all.

Do not give your child outdated prescriptions or medicines that have not been prescribed for this urinary tract infection.

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.