

**Urinary Tract Infection in Pregnancy**

A urinary tract infection is infection in the body's system involved in excreting urine. This system includes:

* The kidneys
* The ureter (tube that carries urine from the kidneys to the bladder)
* The bladder
* The urethra (a short tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body)

The infection most often occurs in the urethra and bladder. It can als otravel from the bladder into the ureter and kidneys.
 **What Causes Urinary Tract Infections?**

Bacteria are usually the cause of UTIs. Normally, a person's urine does not contain bacteria. Bacteria are naturally present on the skin, in the lower bowel and in the stool itself. Sometimes bacteria from one of these sources enter the urinary tract system. Once there, they multiply and cause pain and irritation.

**How Does Bacteria Enter the Urinary Tract?**

Many times there is no obvious reason. The ways it occurs in pregnancy is the same as in a nonpregnant woman. Some of the ways bacteria enter the urinary tract include:

* Partial blockage of a urinary passage (from the pressure of an enlarged uterus, for example)
* Sexual Intercourse
* Catheters (tubes placed into the bladder that empty the bladder for sick people)
* Stool that gets wiped into the vagina after a bowel movement

**Who Gets Urinary Tract Infections?**

Anyone can get a urinary tract infection, but it is most common in women. Women can get the infection from sexual intercourse when bacteria near the vagina gets pushed up into the urinary tract.

**Do Urinary Tract Infections Cause Serious Health Problems?**

With proper care, urinary tract infections rarely cause serious health problems. Most infections are limited to the bladder and urethra. Once in a while a urinary tract infection will lead to a kidney infection.

**Are UTIs Harmful to Pregnant Women?**

Pregnant women are at an increased risk to develop UTIs. Pregnancy hormones cause changes in the urinary tract which predispose women to infections. In addition, as the uterus grows it presses on the bladder and can prevent complete emptying of urine. This stagnant urine is a likely source for infection. Untreated, these infections may lead to kidney infections. Urinary tract infections in pregnant women should be treated to prevent complications.

**How Do I Know if I Have a UTI?**

* Feeling an urgent need to urinate or frequent urination. This is also a common symptom in normal pregnancy.
* Having difficulty urinating
* Having a burning sensation or cramps in the lower back or lower abdomen
* Having a burning sensation during urination
* Urine that looks cloudy or has an odor

**I Think I May have a UTI, What Should I Do?**

If you think you have a urinary tract infection, tell your midwife. She will test a small sample of urine to see if there are bacteria in the urine (called a urine culture).

If your infection is causing discomfort, you will probably be recommended to be treated before the urine test results come back.

**How Are Urinary Tract Infections Treated?**

Urinary Tract infections are treated with antibiotics. You wll need to take the medicine for seven days or as determined by your health care provider.

**How Soon Does the Medicine Work?**

The symptoms should go away in three days. But, don't stop taking your medication early, even if the symptoms go away (unless instructed by your health care provider).

**How Can I Avoid Getting Urinary Tract Infections?**

* Drink at least eight glasses of water a day
* Wipe yourself from front to back
* Empty your bladder shortly before and after sex
* Use a waster-based lubricant during intercourse if you feel dry
* Don't douche
* Don't use feminine deodorants or strong soaps
* Change feminine pads often
* Wash the genital area with warm water before sex
* Wear cotton underwear that fits properly
* Take showers instead of baths
* Avoid tight fitting clothing and pantyhose