

# Urinary System and Your Health

- Drink water when you feel thirsty.
- Urinate often and when the urge arises.
- Consider limiting your caffeine intake.

## Green Flags — All Clear



If you:

- Do not have problems urinating

## What this means ...

- You are taking steps towards your urinary health. Good work!

Keep up the good work!

## Yellow Flags — Caution



If you:

- Have new urinary incontinence, dribbling urine
- Feel pain or burning when you urinate
- Have a fever, feel tired, or are shaky
- Feel you need to urinate often
- Feel pressure in your lower belly
- Have urine that smells bad, is cloudy, or reddish
- Feel pain in your back or side below the ribs

## What this means ...

- You may have a urinary tract infection

**Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.**

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

## Red Flags — Stop and Think



If you:

- See red/bloody urine
- Feel nauseated or vomit
- Are unable to pass any urine
- Have mental changes or confusion
- Have a fever above 101 degrees
- Feel pain in the side, back, or groin

## What this means ...

You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

**If possible, notify your health care provider's office.**

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!

# UTI Fast Facts

- A urinary tract infection (UTI) means that bacteria got into the urinary tract. The urinary tract makes and stores urine and removes it from the body. Your kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra are all a part of the urinary system.
- Most infections are caused from bacteria that live in the bowel.
- Infections of the bladder are called “cystitis.” Infections of the urethra are called “urethritis.” Infection in one or both kidneys is called “pyelonephritis,” or kidney infection.
- Urinary tract infections are more common in women. After menopause, the risk for recurrent infections increases. The bladder becomes less elastic with age and may not empty completely.
- Sexual activity increases the likelihood of developing a UTI.
- Poor personal hygiene (for instance, wiping from back to front) increases the chance of bowel bacteria entering your urinary tract.
- Diabetes and other diseases that impair your immune system—the body’s defense against germs—can increase the risk of UTIs. Other things that can increase your risk include having bowel incontinence, being immobile for a long period of time, problems emptying your bladder completely, and having kidney stones.
- In men, having an enlarged prostate that blocks the flow of urine can contribute to UTI.
- Some people have a catheter (tube) placed during a hospital stay. Even after the catheter is removed, you are at risk for a UTI.
- People who can’t urinate on their own and use a tube (catheter) long-term have an increased risk of UTIs.
- Coffee, other forms of caffeine, alcohol, and dehydration can all aggravate the urinary tract.

## What can you do?

- Drink lots of fluids. Water is best. Try to drink 6–8 glasses a day (unless your health care provider tells you to limit fluids).
- Consider reducing the amount of caffeine you drink.
- Go to the bathroom when you have the urge to pass urine. Urinate frequently.
- Practice good hygiene before and after sexual activity.
- After using the toilet, always wipe from front to back. This is particularly important after you had a bowel movement.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose fitting clothing.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar under good control.
- Only use a catheter when indicated. It should be removed when it is no longer needed.
- If you are prescribed an antibiotic or other medication (e.g., sulfa), make sure you take it as prescribed. Do not skip doses and take it for the full amount of time prescribed by your health care provider.

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org)



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