

Urinary System and Your Health

- Drink at least 50 ounces, or 1.5 liters, of water daily.
- Urinate promptly when the urge arises.

- Urinate soon after sex.
- Women should ensure they wipe from front to back after urination.

Green Flags—All Clear



If you have:

- Do not have problems urinating

What this means ...

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

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you have:

- Have new urinary incontinence or 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, or 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 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 have:

- See red or 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 9-1-1. Emergency!**

UTI Fast Facts

- A urinary tract infection (UTI) means 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 by bacteria that live in the colon and rectum.
- 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. Less estrogen caused by menopause also increases the risk of urinary tract infections in women.
- Sexual activity increases the likelihood of developing a UTI. It is important to urinate after sex.
- Poor personal hygiene (for instance, wiping from back to front) increases the chance of bowel bacteria entering your urinary tract.
- Diabetes and other diseases can weaken your immune system—the body’s defense against germs—and increase the risk of UTIs. Other conditions may increase your risk of UTIs: 1. having bowel incontinence, 2. being immobile for a long period of time, 3. problems emptying your bladder completely, and 4. having kidney stones.
- In men, an enlarged prostate that blocks the flow of urine can increase the risk of a UTI.
- Some people have a catheter (tube) placed in their bladder during a hospital stay. Placement of this catheter increases the risk of a UTI. This risk persists even after the catheter is removed.
- People who are unable to 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 irritate 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).
- 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, especially after a bowel movement.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting clothing.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugars 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, make sure you take it for the number of days prescribed, even if your symptoms improve sooner.

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 information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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