



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)



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# Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can happen when bacteria (germs) get into the urinary tract. The urinary tract is made up of your kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. UTIs are not sexually transmitted (partners do not spread the bacteria (germs) to each other).

Signs of infection may be:

- › Feeling you need to urinate (pee) more often
- › Feeling you need to urinate but then are not able to
- › Pain, pressure, or a burning feeling when urinating (peeing)
- › Foul (bad) smelling or cloudy urine
- › Dark coloured urine
- › Blood in your urine
- › Cramps in the lower part of your abdomen (stomach area)
- › Lower back pain

## How are UTIs treated?

If you have a UTI, your health care provider will likely order an antibiotic medication for you.

## What can I do to help?

- **Take your medication as directed until it is all gone**, even if you start to feel better.
- Drink lots of fluids while taking your medication. Drinking fluids can help flush (get rid of) the germs that cause a UTI.

Some people with other medical conditions or who are on certain medications should not drink more fluids than usual. Check with your health care provider about the safe amount of fluids for you.

- For most people, drinking pure cranberry juice (not cocktail) can help you get rid of the infection sooner by making your urine acidic. Acidic urine slows the growth of bacteria.

Some people with other medical conditions or who are on certain medications should not drink cranberry juice (for example, if you are on blood thinners). Check with your health care provider if cranberry juice is safe for you.

## What can I do for pain?

- Try to urinate often. It is important to flush your urinary tract to get rid of the bacteria.
- Sit in a warm tub filled only with water. **Do not add liquid soap or bath oil — this can make your infection worse.**
- Clean your genital area using a soft cloth 2 times a day with warm water only. If you must use soap, use only unscented.
- For back pain, place a warm water bottle or heating pad on your lower back or lower abdomen for 10 minutes at a time.

## To lower your chance of infection:

- **Do not** wait a long time to urinate. Go as soon as you feel the urge.
- Urinate shortly before and after sex.
- Always wipe from front to back after urinating.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- **Do not** wear tight jeans, panty hose, tights, or yoga pants for long periods of time.
- **Do not** wear panty liners when you are not having your period.
- **Do not** add anything to your bath water (like liquid soap or bath oils).

- Avoid using scented soap or any scented products on your genital area.

**Be sure you understand the above instructions. Please ask staff any questions you may have before leaving the hospital.**

**Call your primary health care provider if:**

- › your symptoms get worse even though you are taking your medication as directed.
- › there is blood in your urine.
- › you have a fever (temperature higher than 38.5° C/101.3° F) or chills.
- › you start having pain in your back, lower back, or on your side between your upper belly and your back.
- › you have more pain or the pain moves to a different part of your body.

**If you are not able to contact your primary health care provider, call 811 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**



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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.