

Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are the second most common infection in children. Signs that a child may have a UTI are:

- Wetting pants or underpants
- Pain with urination
- Urinating a lot (about once every hour)
- An unexplained fever
- Pain in the lower stomach
- Urine that smells bad

Some children will not develop any symptoms when they have an infection.

If your family's health-care provider has found that your child has a UTI, it is important that your child be treated with medicine to stop the infection. It is also important to find out what may have caused the infection and how to keep it from happening again.

Bladder retraining

Many children get UTIs because they develop habits of holding their urine. This is referred to as *dysfunctional voiding*. You might notice your child waiting until the last minute before going to the bathroom, or not going to the bathroom very often. Some children have learned to ignore it when their bodies tell them it is time to go to the bathroom. Children with these habits may squat down on their heels, cross their legs, or hold between their legs to keep from wetting. Other children may urinate small amounts often and not empty their bladders all the way. They might urinate only until they relieve the feeling of pressure even though their bladders are not empty, or they might be in a hurry. These habits may lead to wetting and bladder infection.

To help prevent this problem, your child should urinate on a schedule every **2 to 3** hours during the day (timed voiding). Some children may need to go more often. You might have to help your child change their habits, which could take a long time. Younger children (ages 3 to 8) will need an adult to remind them to go to the bathroom on schedule. Older children (ages 8 to 12) still need an adult to monitor them, but sometimes do well with their own system to remind them, like setting a watch alarm to go off every 2 to 3 hours.

At school, an adult needs to remind your child to go to the bathroom every **2 to 3** hours. Letting children go to the bathroom whenever they need to does not work for children who have dysfunctional voiding. We can work with you and your child's teacher to set up a plan for school as well as at home. The goal of the timed voiding schedule is to train the child to urinate often on their own. Urinating every 2 to 3 hours needs to become a lifetime habit.

Good toileting habits

It is very important for your child to relax when urinating. This allows the bladder to empty completely. It is important to empty the bladder in order to get rid of bacteria that can grow in the urine and lead to UTIs.

Tips to help your child relax when urinating:

- For young girls, remove pants or tights completely off of one leg so that your child has plenty of room to spread her legs wide apart.

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- For boys and girls, place bottom securely in the toilet opening and have them lean forward. This will help them to relax their bottom and legs. Give them a stool to raise their feet. Use a potty chair with younger children.
- Ask your child to take slow, deep breaths.
- Have your child relax their head, arm, body and leg muscles like a rag doll.
- Ask your child to imagine urine flowing like a stream or a gentle garden hose.
- Turn on the water faucet. The sound of running water may help your child urinate.
- Give your child plenty of time for urination. Relaxing and emptying the bladder can take from 3 to 5 minutes.

Children should urinate every 2 to 3 hours to help prevent infections.

Bowel habits

A daily bowel movement is best for your child. Ask your child to take time to sit on the toilet after breakfast or dinner. Often, children who have a problem with infrequent, hard bowel movements (constipation) also can have UTIs.

Check your child's diet. Some foods can cause constipation. For example, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, bananas, rice, Jell-O, and the pectin in apples and apple juice can make it harder to have a bowel movement. Encourage your child to drink plenty of water and eat foods rich in fiber. Here is a list of foods with a lot of fiber that you can give to your child:

- Breads and cereals - whole wheat breads and cereals, corn bread, raisin bran and bran muffins
- Vegetables and Legumes - beans, corn, broccoli, yams, cabbage and asparagus

- Fruits - figs, dates, raisins, strawberries, melons, plums, pears, oranges and cherries
- Snacks - popcorn, nuts, seeds (sunflower, pumpkin), shredded coconut, granola, and molasses cookies

Evaluation of children with urinary tract infections

Any infant or child who develops a UTI needs a urinary tract evaluation. This means that your child will need to get:

- A physical exam
- An ultrasound
- An x-ray of the bladder

Some children with UTIs will have other problems with their urinary tract. It is important to know about these other problems in order to provide the best care for your child.

Resources

You can watch a video online about bladder health by going to this Web site:

- http://www.seattlechildrens.org/our_services/clinical_services/urology/resources.asp and clicking on "Bladder Health Video"
- or by visiting: http://www.seattlechildrens.org/media/our_services/bladder_health_video.wmv

TO LEARN MORE

- **Urology Clinic (206) 987-2509 (Weekdays)
(206) 987-2000 (Evenings/Weekends)**
- **Your Child's Health-Care Provider**

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call the Family Resource Center at (206) 987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health-care provider.