

# Urinary Reflux

## What is urinary reflux?

Urine is made by the kidneys and travels down a tube called the ureter to be stored in the bladder. Normally, the urine flows one way. If your child has reflux, urine can flow back up from the bladder into the kidneys.

## How serious is reflux?

By itself, reflux is not harmful to the kidneys. It can become a problem if there is an infection in the urinary tract. That is because bacteria in the bladder can travel up and infect your child's kidneys. Kidney infections can scar the kidneys. Reflux is graded on a scale of 1 to 5. Grade 1 reflux is the most mild, and grade 5 is the most severe. Reflux can occur on one or both sides.

## How is reflux treated?

Your child's health care team will observe your child for a period of time. The urologist will order radiology testing and clinic visits every 12 to 18 months. Your child may need a low dose of daily antibiotics to keep them from getting infections.

If your child is taking a daily dose of antibiotic, it is very important for them to take it every day. Bedtime is the best time to give your child the medicine.

Some children may need surgery to fix urinary reflux, while other children will not. Many children outgrow it.

## What are the signs of a bladder infection?

- Fever
- Irritability or feeling cranky
- Urine that smells bad
- Wetting pants or underpants
- Pain with urination

If your child develops these symptoms, call your child's doctor and have your child tested for a urine infection.

## What are the signs of a kidney infection?

- Vomiting
- Side (flank) pain
- High fever

Kidney infections should be treated immediately. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has these symptoms.

Your child's urologist will monitor your child every 12 to 18 months with radiologic testing.

This will include:

- A renal ultrasound to check for kidney growth and scarring
- A test called a "voiding cystourethrogram" (VCUG) to find out the grade of reflux

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Your child's health-care provider should monitor your child with routine urine tests if your child is ill. Depending on what daily antibiotic your child is on your child's health-care provider may also check bloodwork every 6 months.

### 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](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](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.*