



Some new advice when passing water becomes a problem

UTIs is the abbreviation more commonly used to describe urinary tract infections - infections which can involve just about any part of the body's plumbing, filtration and liquid waste disposal system. The kidneys and the bladder can be affected, as can the ureter and the urethra - the "pipes" which carry urine to and from the bladder.

Bacteria which normally live harmlessly in the intestine or the bowel are the usual suspects for causing UTIs. If these bacteria manage to spread from the anus (the back passage) into the urethra and then further into the urinary system, they can cause some rather nasty and discomforting conditions.

Urethritis is the medical term describing the infection when just the urethra is affected. If the infection spreads to the bladder causing the bladder lining to become raw and inflamed the condition is known as cystitis; whereas pyelonephritis is the name for the infection if it spreads to the kidneys.

All these conditions can cause a prickly, scalding or burning sensation when passing urine, and the urge to urinate frequently. If the bladder and kidney are affected, the urine might be cloudy or bloody and you may experience lower abdominal or back pain. Kidney related infections are

potentially very serious and need prompt treatment to avoid kidney damage.

Mild cystitis can sometimes be treated effectively by drinking plenty of fluids (preferably water) to flush the bugs out the system, whilst often a urinary alkaliniser - something to make the urine less acid - will also help. Some studies have shown that cranberry juice or cranberry extract tablets may assist in preventing symptoms of cystitis in people who are susceptible to repeat infections.

Anyone at any age can get cystitis, but there are several high risk groups. Women, generally, are more likely than men to suffer with UTIs because the urethra is so short. Also, female hormones can affect urine acidity making it more likely the offending organisms can thrive - especially at certain times of the menstrual cycle, during pregnancy and menopause or after a hysterectomy. Sexually active women are more at risk because sex can push the bacteria into the urethra.

Men with prostate problems may have difficulties with urine flow and bladder emptying and so allow the bacteria more time to reproduce. Older people, or people with another chronic medical condition such as diabetes, where the immune system is already under stress, are also be more likely to get UTIs.

For further information, our Pharmacists are available to answer any questions

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