

# I have to pee.... NOW!

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common ailments that are often easily diagnosed and treated. Mostly, the infections are in the lower urinary tract, the bladder and the urethra. Serious UTIs can end up in the kidneys and cause wide-spread infection. If the symptoms are not recognized, a UTI can quickly become an infection that spreads in the body causing sepsis or septicemia. If left untreated, sepsis can cause hospitalization or worse, death.

**Risk Factors.** Women are at a greater risk for developing a UTI than men. Individuals with an intellectual disability who are incontinent, have difficulty cleaning themselves after toileting, have a history of urinary tract infections, or have a catheter are at risk for UTIs.

**Symptoms** for a UTI may include:

- Urinary frequency—an individual has to go a LOT
- Urinary urgency—an individual has to go NOW
- Decreased urine output—though an individual goes a LOT and NOW, not much comes out.
- Pain and burning—upon urination
- Incontinence—an individual just can't hold it in.
- Appearance of urine—the urine may be cloudy, a deep yellow color, blood-tinged and have a strong odor.
- Falling—many times an individual may try to get up at night without assistance. What may look like confusion may actually be a person's attempt to GET TO THAT BATHROOM.
- Altered Mental Status—as the infection spreads, it may cause confusion, especially in older individuals.
- Fever—a low grade fever may be present.
- Pelvic pain in women
- Rectal pain in men
- Back pain
- Nausea and vomiting

Any of these symptoms should prompt a visit to the individual's Primary Care Provider (PCP) in order to get the proper treatment. A person with a UTI should drink plenty of clear fluids, such as water. Do not provide coffee, tea or sodas because the caffeine may increase the person's discomfort. Allow for time to rest so the body can heal.

**Prevention** from UTIs:

- Drink plenty of water—this helps dilute the urine allowing the flushing of the bacteria with more frequent urination.
- Wipe/clean from front to back—this decreases the spread of bacteria
- Empty the bladder after intercourse—this flushes bacteria from in and around the urethra.
- Avoid potentially irritating female products such as deodorant sprays or powders.

Anytime there is a question that one of these symptoms is present, call the physician. If more are present, take the individual to the nearest hospital for evaluation. Timing is critical--it could be a matter of life and death.