

Flush Out the Risks: Urinary Tract Infection

People with diabetes have a higher risk of a **Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)** because of changes in the immune system, warns **Aslena Hussain, Diabetes Nurse Manager, Diabetic Society of Singapore.**

A urinary tract infection (UTI) begins in your urinary system. While UTIs limited to your bladder can be painful and annoying, serious consequences can occur if the infection spreads to your kidneys.



Women are most at risk of developing a UTI. In fact, half of all women will develop a UTI during their lifetimes, and many will experience more than one.

The urinary system comprises the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra, all of which play a role in removing waste from your body. The kidneys filter waste from your blood. Tubes called ureters carry urine from your kidneys to your bladder, where it is stored until it passes out of your body through the urethra. Most infections

involve the lower tract — the urethra and the bladder.

Any other disorder that suppresses the immune system raises the risk of a urinary infection.

Symptoms of UTI

You should see your doctor if you have any of these signs or symptoms:

- burning feeling when you urinate
- frequent or intense urges to urinate, even when you have little urine to pass
- pain in your back or lower abdomen
- cloudy, dark, bloody, or unusual-smelling urine
- fever or chills
- in women, pressure above the pubic bone
- in men, a feeling of fullness in the rectum

Treatment of UTI

UTIs are treated with antibacterial drugs. The choice of drug and length of treatment depend on the person's history and the urine tests that identify the offending bacteria.

More than 152 million men worldwide suffer from erectile dysfunction but less than 10 percent of men seek treatment.

Prevention of UTI

- Drink lots of fluid, especially water (6 to 8 glasses), to flush the bacteria from your system.
- Urinate frequently and use the toilet when you feel the urge. Bacteria can grow when urine stays in the bladder too long.
- Cleanse the genital area before sexual intercourse. Urinate shortly after sex to flush away bacteria that might have entered your urethra during sex.
- After using the toilet, always wipe from front to back, especially after a bowel movement.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting clothes so that air can keep the area dry. Avoid tight-fitting jeans and nylon underwear which trap moisture and can help bacteria grow.
- Avoid using feminine hygiene sprays and scented douches as these may irritate the urethra.
- Take showers instead of tub baths.
- For women, using a diaphragm or spermicide for birth control can lead to UTIs by increasing bacteria growth. Unlubricated condoms or spermicidal condoms increase irritation and help bacteria cause symptoms. Switch to lubricated condoms without spermicide or use a non-spermicidal lubricant.

You can lower your risk of sexual and urologic problems by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol close to the target numbers your doctor recommends. Be physically active and maintain a healthy weight to prevent the long-term complications of diabetes.

