Recurring UTI? what can I do? [1]

Hey Alice,

What can I do about recurring UTIs (Urinary Tract Infections)?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Urinary tract infections can definitely be aggravating, especially when it feels like they've taken up permanent residence. UTIs can have a variety of possible causes. While they can affect both women and men, women tend to get them more often (because their urethras are shorter). Sexually active women are at a higher risk: friction during intercourse can irritate the urethra and introduce the germs that cause the infection, while contact with semen, diaphragm jelly, and/or spermicides can also increase the likelihood of getting a UTI. Other risk factors for UTIs include:

- Kidney stones.
- Diabetes.
- First intercourse, or suddenly having intercourse more frequently.
- Enlarged prostate (in men).
- Menopause (in women).
- Medications or illnesses that lower immunity.

Based on this information, you may have an inkling about the source of your repeat UTIs. Depending on the suspected culprit, you can try:

- Changing sex positions (goal: to reduce friction near the urethra's opening).
- Adding a dab of water-based lube during sex (will help reduce friction).
- Drinking much more water (helps flush out the urethra).
- Urinating both before and after intercourse, for both men and women (helps flush the urethra of bacteria, semen, diaphragm jelly, and/or spermicide).
- Washing your (and your partner's) hands before getting down to business (again, minimizing bacterial contact).
- For women, wiping from front to back after using the restroom and avoiding scented
feminine products and douches (helps avoid irritation and bacteria).

Some research has found that drinking cranberry juice regularly (a low-sugar variety is best, the bacteria that cause UTIs can thrive on sugar) can help in preventing recurring UTIs in women. You may also want to consider cranberry supplements such as pills or powders (available at natural health food stores) if the juice is not to your taste.

Medical attention is important, especially with recurrent UTIs, because untreated or chronic infections may result in bladder or kidney infection and even damage. Back or abdominal pain, fever, or chills along with an infection may be signs of a more serious problem. Be sure to let your health care provider know how often you get UTIs and whether or not they occur after specific situations; for example, he/she may prescribe antibiotics to take after sexual intercourse if that's when you tend to get infections. Hopefully your provider can help you kick your UTIs to the curb for good.

Alice!
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Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)
Urinary Tract Infection (UTI's)

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