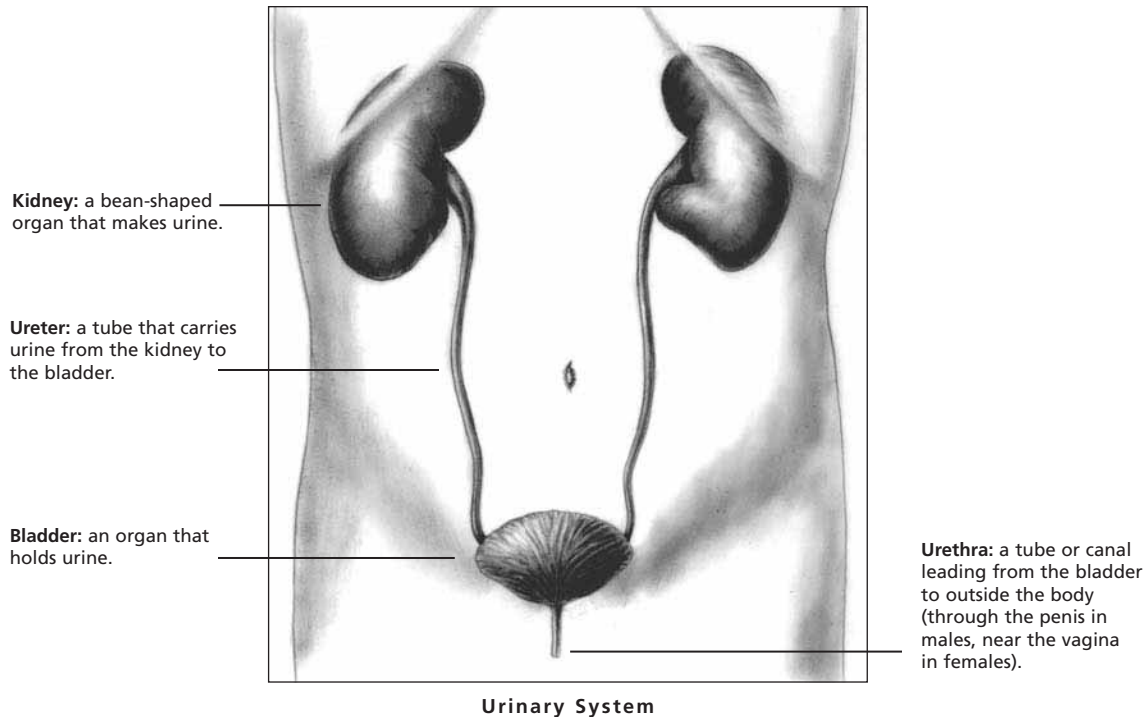


Let's Talk About...

Urinary tract infection



A urinary tract infection, also called a UTI, is one of the most common infections in children. It affects the kidneys, ureter, bladder, and urethra (see picture of urinary system). Most often, children's bladders and kidneys are affected. If the bladder is infected, it is called cystitis (sis-TITE-us). An infection of the kidneys is called pyelonephritis (PIE-low-nef-RITE-us).

A UTI is usually caused by bacteria (germs) entering the urinary tract through the urethra. The infection may cause pain when your child urinates. Bubble bath, shampoo, or not changing diapers frequently enough may also cause pain with urination, and occasionally help cause UTIs. The chemicals in the bubbles and shampoo irritate the urethra when your child sits in this water. Occasionally a child is born with a blockage or back-up in the urinary system—this may cause infections to develop more easily.

Urinary tract infections most often happen with children between the ages of 2-6. Girls are more likely to have UTIs than boys. A baby younger than 4 months old may need to go to the hospital to best treat a UTI. After a UTI is diagnosed, x-ray tests may be needed.

What happens with a urinary tract infection?

Symptoms are different according to your child's age:

Babies

- poor appetite
- vomiting
- sleepiness, inactivity, and increased fussiness
- fever (over 101°F)
- diarrhea

Older children:

(the symptoms may be more localized)

- pain or burning when urinating
- bloody urine
- going to the bathroom often, but with small amounts of urine
- strong-smelling or dark colored urine
- a feeling of having to urinate all the time
- belly or back pain
- fever

Your child may start wetting the bed at night or wetting her pants during the day even if she is toilet trained. Half of all children with a UTI have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.

To find out if your child has a urinary tract infection, you must collect a clean catch urine sample. Your nurse will tell you how to get this. You can also see the handouts, *Let's Talk About... clean catch urine samples for boys*, and... *clean catch urine samples for girls*.

The urine is looked at under a microscope for pus and bacteria. It is then sent to the lab to grow germs and find out which antibiotic will kill the germs. Once the type of bacteria is found, the proper antibiotic can be prescribed.

How do you prevent a urinary tract infection?

- Teach your child to keep herself clean. Girls should be taught to wipe from front to back, especially after having a bowel movement.

- Try to stay away from harsh liquids that may irritate your child's urethra and provide a place for bacteria to grow.
- Have your child urinate after baths.
- Sexually active females should urinate after sexual intercourse.
- Some children will have UTIs again and again and may need to take a daily antibiotic to prevent more infections.

How do you treat a urinary tract infection?

If your child does have a UTI, your doctor will write a prescription for an antibiotic. It is very important that the medicine is given the way your doctor tells you and taken until all the medication is gone. While taking the antibiotic, your child should be encouraged to drink fluids and follow the doctor's instructions. If symptoms continue, call your doctor for further instructions.

Call your doctor if. . .

- Your child's urine becomes bloody
- Your child starts acting very sick
- Your child can only pass very small amounts of urine
- Fever or painful urination is not gone within 48 hours after beginning antibiotics
- Your child gets worse while taking the medicine
- A rash develops after starting the medicine



All of the information contained in the *Let's Talk About... series* is for educational purposes only. This educational information is not a substitute for medical advice or for care from a physician or other health care professional. If you have questions about your child's health, contact your health care provider.

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