

# UTIs in Children

## What Parents Should Know



### What is a Urinary Tract Infection?

A Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is caused by bacteria infecting the urinary tract – the organs and tubes in our body that make, store and pass urine. The urinary tract is made up of the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra. Bacteria are not often found in urine. Still, they can enter the urinary tract from the skin near the anus. UTIs are more common in girls than boys. About 8 percent of girls and 1 - 2 percent of boys have had a urinary tract infection (UTI) by the time they are 5 years old. In girls, the urethra is closer to the anus and the length of the urethra is shorter. Infections are more common in the urethra and bladder, which make up the lower part of the urinary tract. Infections that move up the ureters to the kidneys can be more serious. If left untreated, these infections may lead to kidney failure.

### Signs and Symptoms

**Older children** who are toilet-trained and can talk about their symptoms can help to spot a UTI. Some signs of a UTI in older children are:

- the feeling of pain, burning or stinging when passing urine
- passing urine a lot or feeling more urges to pass urine
- leaking urine in children who were dry before
- urine with blood
- fever
- low back pain or pain in the bladder

**Babies** have other UTI signs. The clearest sign of a UTI in babies may be a fever. Babies with UTIs may also act fussy, vomit and feed poorly. If the UTI becomes a kidney infection, the child or baby is more likely to have a fever with shaking chills, pain in the back or side, or vomiting.

### Diagnosis and Treatment

Your child's doctor may ask for a urine sample to test for a UTI. Older children may be asked to pass urine into a sterile cup. Babies and children in diapers often need a catheter (small tube) to collect urine. The catheter keeps the sample from being contaminated by bacteria on the skin. The urine will then be tested for bacteria. The type of bacteria found may help decide the best drug to treat the UTI, most often antibiotics.

If your child takes antibiotics for the UTI, it is of great value for your child to keep taking all the antibiotics, even if he or she is feeling better. Most UTIs will be cured within one week of treatment. Urge your child to drink plenty of fluids, and keep track of his or her symptoms. If symptoms worsen or do not get better within three days, your child may need to be checked again by their doctor. If your child has more than one UTI, seeing a pediatric urologist may be a good next step. They may suggest more testing to learn about your child's urinary tract. A common problem causing UTIs in children is a backwards flow of urine. When urine flows from the bladder up toward the kidneys, it is called vesicoureteral reflux (VUR).

### Prevention

For babies, frequent diaper changes can help prevent UTIs. For older children, it is of great value to teach them good bathroom habits. Girls should wipe from front to rear — not rear to front - after each bowel movement. This keeps germs from spreading from the anus to the urethra. All children should also avoid "holding it" for too long when they feel they have the urge to pass urine. Urine left in the bladder may give bacteria a good place to grow.



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If your child gets more than one UTI or you suspect a problem, visit [UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist](https://UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist) to find a pediatric urologist near you.

### About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts. To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, [UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions](https://UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions) or go to [UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist](https://UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist) to find a doctor near you.

### Disclaimer

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always talk to a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For more information, visit [UrologyHealth.org/Download](https://UrologyHealth.org/Download) or call 800-828-7866.

