

## How can I prevent UTIs?

- Catheterization technique
  - Wash hands before catheterization
  - Clean meatus before catheterization
- Monthly or more frequent catheter changes; the longer the catheter is left indwelling, the higher the risk for UTI.
- Keep your drainage system closed with as few disconnections as possible (changing the drainage bag regularly does not prevent UTIs).
- Secure catheter to leg.
- Keep bag lower than bladder to prevent backflow.
- Empty bag regularly.
- Daily antibiotics for prevention are not recommended because they predispose to drug-resistant germs.
- Drink plenty of fluids daily (6–8 glasses or about 48–64 oz.).
- Some supplements may help:
  - Oral cranberry products
  - Probiotics
  - D-Mannose

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# Urinary Tract Infections in Persons with Urinary Catheters and Neurogenic Bladders

Information for patients & families



## Urinary catheters

Any type of catheter in the bladder increases the risk of having bacteria in the urine.

However, bacteria in the urine **does not** mean you have a UTI – in most cases bacteria inhabit the bladder but do not cause an infection.

## What are the symptoms of UTI?

- Fever and chills
- Flank pain
- Bladder spasms
- Lower abdominal pain
- Low blood pressure

In people with spinal cord injuries, other symptoms may include:

- Increased spasticity, anxiety and apprehension
- Irregular or racing heartbeat
- Sudden high blood pressure
- Pounding headache
- Flushing of the skin
- Profuse sweating, lightheadedness, dizziness or confusion.

Several common symptoms do not necessarily indicate a UTI:

- Confusion
- Weakness
- Cloudy and/or foul-smelling urine are not symptoms of UTIs.

## How is a UTI diagnosed?

You need the symptoms of UTI and an abnormal urine test (urinalysis and urine culture).

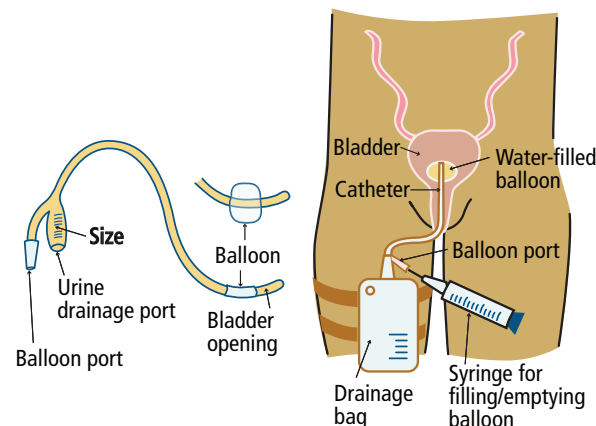
**A urine test to look for a UTI should not be done if you do not have symptoms and signs concerning for UTI.**

Unfortunately, urine testing without symptoms is not helpful. Most people with catheters have bacteria in their urine and abnormal urine tests without a UTI.

## How is a urine sample obtained if a catheter is in place?

Urine should only be taken from the urine drainage port and never from the bag.

The catheter should be changed first to get a fresh specimen.



## When do I need antibiotics?

- You have symptoms of a UTI **and**
- Your urine tests positive for a UTI

Antibiotics are **not needed every time** bacteria is found in the urine and you have no symptoms.

## Why should antibiotics be avoided, if not needed?

### Antibiotics have side effects:

Allergic reaction, fever, rash, nausea, vomiting, kidney damage, diarrhea.

### Antibiotics increase the risk for future infections:

Antibiotics can kill "good" germs natural to our body. This can lead to a potentially fatal and severe diarrhea caused by *C. difficile*.

### Antibiotics promote "stronger," resistant germs:

Antibiotics can make germs become "drug resistant," which means they are harder to kill with commonly used antibiotics and fewer treatment choices are available.