

Wellness Education

Reducing Urinary Tract Infections

Setting up your routine is essential for taking care of your bladder health. Even more important, sticking to your routine helps prevent bladder (and possibly kidney) complications.

Many people who practice intermittent self-catheterization get urinary tract infections (UTIs). Some people may have an occasional UTI, and some have frequent UTI episodes. An infection can not only be challenging, it can affect quality of life, both physically and emotionally.

What guidelines should I follow to avoid getting a UTI?

You might recall seeing an earlier Coloplast article entitled “Bladder Hygiene: Keys to Better Bladder Health.” This article offered details on the following tips for keeping your bladder healthy:



- Regularly empty your bladder



- Discard catheter after each use



- Drink adequate fluids



- Use good hand washing techniques



- Take all medication as prescribed by your physician

Each of the steps above may seem like common sense, but each step is critical in helping you avoid a UTI.

How does a urinary tract infection develop?

When you self-catheterize, organisms from improper hand washing, or bacteria near the urethral opening, can be introduced into the urinary tract. The bacteria can stay on the surface of the catheter and travel through the urethra up into the bladder. That is why it is so important to:

- Thoroughly wash hands before cathing
- Thoroughly clean around the urethral opening
- Use a new, sterile, well-lubricated catheter each time to minimize trauma and bleeding during insertion and withdrawal

Keeping the bladder empty reduces the amount of time urine sits in the bladder. The longer urine stays in the bladder, the more time there is for any bacteria in the bladder to multiply. This is why it's so important to follow your physician's advice about catheterizing according to schedule (it's often 4-6 times per day).

Tip: Every once in a while, measure the amount of urine you empty. It should be no more than around 400 mL. If you empty more than 400 mL, ask your physician if you should catheterize more often.

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Why is it important to drink adequate fluids?

Bacteria are less likely to grow if you are well hydrated and if you regularly empty your bladder as directed by your physician. The type of fluids you drink may also be important: urine that has a slightly acidic pH may help you avoid infections. If you have frequent UTIs, ask your physician or clinician to check your urine pH. Certain beverages and supplements (such as cranberry juice or extract, or vitamin C) may make the urine more acidic. Always check with your physician, however, before taking any supplements or over-the-counter medications. Your physician may advise against taking these products for medical reasons (for instance, they may react with other medications you're taking).

How do I know if I have a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

Symptoms of a UTI may include:

- Fever, chills
- Urgency or unexpected urine leakage
- Increased spasms of legs, abdomen and /or bladder
- Pain above the pubic bone area
- Headache
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Feeling poorly
- Increased mucus in your urine
- Cloudy and strong smelling urine (unrelated to foods that can cause urine odor)
- Mental confusion (especially in an older person)
- Blood in the urine (enough blood to make the urine the color of cranberry juice)

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your physician immediately.

The presence of bacteria in your urine does not always mean that you have an infection. Depending on your symptoms, your physician may or may not decide to treat you with antibiotics.

There are however, steps you can take to prevent an infection if you begin to notice changes in your urine:

- Drink more fluids (as long as you do not have any medical conditions that limit your fluid intake)
- Make sure you are catheterizing the maximum number of times recommended to you—this helps keep your bladder empty
- Talk to your physician first, but it may be beneficial to take vitamin C tablets, cranberry extract tablets or cranberry juice to help acidify your urine
- Check your urine pH (litmus paper is available at the drugstore)

If I have frequent UTIs, what could my physician do to help?

Your physician or clinician may need to assess other factors, and urine or blood tests are often a first step. Your clinician may ask about constipation and/or incontinence, how much fluid you drink and your schedule for catheterizing. People who have chronic UTIs may also need to see a urologist, since there might be underlying conditions that increase the likelihood of infections.

It is important to evaluate all the ways you manage your bladder health, including the type of catheter you use.

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Some final comments

Leading an active lifestyle is very important, both physically and emotionally. It is also important that you continue to take good care of your bladder. To reduce or eliminate the possibility of UTIs, practice good hygiene and adhere to your catheterization schedule. Then, take time to also enjoy all that life offers you.

It is difficult to learn how to do intermittent self-catheterization, especially if you have vision problems, limited hand dexterity or other physical challenges. However, it's very likely that you can still master the technique—and you'll rely on those skills for many years to come. Talk to your clinician or physician for suggestions, and don't get discouraged. Once you master intermittent self-catheterization as a part of your bladder management routine, it will offer much more freedom to your schedule—and your lifestyle.

If you have any questions regarding intermittent self-catheterization, product usage, or availability, please contact a Coloplast Consumer Care Specialist at 1-866-226-6362.

Coloplast does not practice medicine. The recommendations and information in this material are not medical advice. Contact your healthcare professional for personal medical advice or diagnosis. IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911.



The Coloplast Consumer Care Specialist can assist you with your intimate healthcare needs. They are available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (CST).

About the Team

Coloplast Consumer Care can make life easier for people living with intimate healthcare needs. The team offers one-on-one assistance, as well as:

Provide Product Samples

Consumer Care Specialists are trained support staff, offering free samples from the Coloplast continence product lines. Call the toll free hotline at 1-866-226-6362 or email samples@coloplast.com to have trial products shipped today.

Answer Questions

Our team can answer questions regarding product lines and educational materials, as well as insurance and reimbursement issues. Consumer Care Specialists will provide the information you need.

Find the Right Product Solution

Consumer Care Specialists can help locate a medical supplier in your local area to ensure you have access to the correct products.

1-866-226-6362

The Coloplast story began back in 1954. Elise Sørensen is a nurse. Her sister Thora has just had an ostomy operation and is afraid to go out, fearing that her stoma might leak in public. Listening to her sister's problems, Elise creates the world's first adhesive ostomy pouch. A pouch that does not leak, giving Thora – and thousands of people like her – the chance to return to their normal life.

A simple solution with great significance.

Today, our business includes ostomy care, urology and continence care and wound and skin care. But our way of doing business still follows Elise's example: we listen, we learn and we respond with products and services that make life easier for people with intimate healthcare needs.

References

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3. De Ridder DJ, Everaert K, Fernandez LG, Valero JV, Duran AB, Abrisqueta ML, Ventura MG, Sotillo AR, Intermittent catheterization with hydrophilic-coated catheters (SpeediCath) reduces the risk of clinical urinary tract infection in spinal cord injured patients: a prospective randomized parallel comparative trial. *Eur Urol*. 2005;48:991-995.
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* The correlation between hydrophilic catheters and a delay/reduction in UTIs has not been cleared by the FDA. Some of the studies referenced were supported by grants from Coloplast and authors may have received support from Coloplast or have a financial interest in Coloplast.

Important Safety Information: SpeediCath catheters are indicated for use by patients with chronic urine retention and patients with a post void residual volume (PVR) due to neurogenic and non-neurogenic voiding dysfunction. The catheter is inserted into the urethra to reach the bladder allowing urine to drain. SpeediCath catheters are available by prescription only. Patients performing self-catheterization should follow the advice of, and direct questions about use of the product to, their medical professional. Before using the device, carefully read the product labels and information accompanying the device including the instructions for use which contain additional safety information. The SpeediCath catheter is for single use only; discard it after use. If you experience symptoms of a urinary tract infection, or are unable to pass the catheter into the bladder, contact your healthcare professional. For further questions, call Coloplast Corp. at 1-866-226-6362 and/or consult the company website at www.coloplast.us.