



"Primary Care Naturally"

Snohomish Naturopathic Clinic

1101 Avenue D, Suite D103, Snohomish, WA 98290

Phone: 360.568.2686 Fax: 360.862.8016

www.SnohomishNaturopathic.com

Understanding Urinary Tract Infections

By Lakshmi Thiagaraj, ARNP

Do you suffer from painful urination or recurrent urinary tract infections? Understanding the anatomy of the urinary tract, the irritating symptoms, the causes and the risks of urinary tract may help prevent future episodes.

The urinary tract is composed of the kidney, ureters, bladder, and urethra. Urinary tract infections (UTIs) commonly occur in the bladder and the urethra. UTIs are more common in women, than in men, mainly because of the female anatomy, as the urethra is near the vagina. If left untreated, infection can spread to your kidneys, causing kidney infection (pyelonephritis) or kidney damage. So prompt recognition of symptoms, diagnosing, and early treatment can prevent complications.

Symptoms of UTI can include: burning/pain with urination, cloudy urine, blood in the urine (hematuria), strong smelling urine, urgency and frequency of urination. Cystitis, inflammation of the bladder, can present as pelvic pressure, lower abdominal discomfort, frequent urination, painful urination, and hematuria. Signs of pyelonephritis can include fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, flank pain (kidney pain). If symptoms continue despite treatment, further evaluation may be necessary. Elderly patients may present without any symptoms, except for confusion and/or fevers. UTIs can also occur in infants and children.

E. coli is the most common organism responsible for causing UTIs; however other organisms can also be responsible. Obtaining a urine culture is important in order to identify the organism and treat effectively. UTIs usually occur when bacteria enters via the urethra and then multiplies in the bladder. Sexual activity has also been noted to cause UTI/UTI symptoms in women.

Risks for UTIs include: female gender, sexually activity, use of diaphragms or spermicidal agents for Birth control, (atrophic vaginitis) lack of estrogen from menopause, urinary tract abnormalities, blockage in the urinary tract, weakened immune system and use of a catheter to help facilitate urination.

Naturopathic herbs used to treat UTIs include Uva Ursi, Allium sativum, Hydrastis Canadensis, sandalwood oil. For a severe infection it is critical to start antibiotics to prevent kidney infection.

Preventing UTIs: Drink plenty of water, avoid bladder irritants such as caffeine, spicy foods alcohol, chocolates and sugars. Food allergy testing can be beneficial in identifying

inflammatory foods in your diet. Voiding regularly and not holding your urine can help prevent infections. Voiding after intercourse and maintaining genital hygiene can also help minimize infections. In women who present with atrophic vaginitis and no history of gynecological cancers or cardiovascular risks, vaginal estrogen therapy may be beneficial.

Those with recurrent urinary tract infections or infections resistant to antibiotics can benefit from being evaluated by a urologist. Testing can include CT scan/Ultrasound of the Urinary Tract, or cystoscopy (inspection of the bladder with a scope).

Reference <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/urinary-tract-infection/DS00286>