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Women at higher risks to UTI

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Urinary tract infections (UTIs) is a very common infection of the urinary system that mostly affects women. It affects up to 60 percent of women as well as men and children. It generally affects the part of the urinary system- the kidneys, the ureters, the bladder and the urethra. The bacteria from the large intestine escapes the anus and invades the urethra and can even travel up to the bladder. If the infection is not treated, the bacteria can reach the kidney. Women are more prone to the infection because of the shorter urethras which allow bacteria quick access to the bladder.

A report from WHO says, “Urinary tract infections are considered to be the leading cause of morbidity and health care expenditures in persons of all ages. Around 50% of women have reported of having had a UTI at some point in their lives.” As the severity of the infection rises, people still remain unaware of the causes and the serious complications that it can have.

Why Women Stand a Higher Risk?

Most common culprit for UTI is the E-coli, a bacterium that is excreted with the human feces. In women, the proximity of the urethra and anus facilitate easy passage of the bacteria into the urinary tract. It is important to note that young sexually active women are more prone to UTI as sexual activity is the cause of 75–90% of bladder infections. UTI is a very commonly seen in newly married women and has been aptly termed "Honeymoon cystitis".

Taking Precaution during Pregnancy

UTIs are more common during pregnancy, due to the changes in the urinary tract. When the uterus, sitting right above the bladder grows, it increased weight can block the drainage of the urine from the bladder, causing an infection. A kidney infection during pregnancy can increase the complications and may lead to premature birth or pre-eclampsia (a state of high blood pressure and kidney dysfunction during pregnancy that can lead to seizures).

Symptoms of UTI

- A strong persistent urge to urinate
- Lower back and abdomen pain
- A burning sensation while urinating
- Strong- smelling urine
- Pelvic pain, especially in the centre of the pelvis and around the around the area of the pubic bone
- Strong-smelling urine

When treated promptly, the infection can rarely lead to any complication. However, if avoided, it can lead to serious complications like permanent kidney damage or chronic kidney infection, increased risk in pregnant women in delivering premature infants and sepsis which is a life-threatening complication especially if the infection works its way to the urinary tract and to the kidneys.

Prevention of UTI

- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water- Drinking water ensures that the urine is diluted and the person urinates more frequently allowing bacteria to be flushed out of the urinary tract before an infection begins
- Empty the bladder frequently, and make sure that you have emptied the bladder completely
- Avoid using feminine products like deodorant sprays, powders in the genital area which can irritate the urethra.
- Wipe from front to back after urinating and after bowel movement since it prevents the bacteria in the anal region from spreading to the vagina and urethra.
- Keep the genital area clean by wearing loose clothes. Tight clothes can trap all the moisture and creating a perfect environment for the growth of bacteria.

Treatment

Head to the doctor if you suspect a urinary tract infection, depending on the severity of the infection, the duration of the treatment can be short or can last for longer than a week. Ensure that you finish off the cycles of medicine completely even if you start feeling better. Severe infections, for those affecting the kidneys may require a longer course of oral or intravenous antibiotics. Drink lots of water, and eat foods high in Vitamin C which ensures better immunity response. Lastly, Consuming unsweetened cranberry juice can also support the normalization of the kidney function.

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