

# Urinary Tract Infections in Children

If your cutie-pie doesn't smell well, often wets the bed, has difficulty peeing, changes in body odor, has an unexplained rise in temperature and vomiting, and has a color or urine does not seem to be normal. All of these could be symptoms of a urinary tract infection.

Urinary tract infections are quite common in toddlers and even in infants. But its diagnosis is challenging to make as they are not able to express themselves. Timely treatment is vital to avoid the spread of infection and permanent damage to the delicate urinary system of children.

Bacterial infections of the urinary tract are most common among the young ones, primarily due to bacteria residing in the bowel. Many cases of urinary tract infection require timely treatment with antibiotics. The urinary tract is divided into upper and lower sections.

- Upper urinary tract- compromised of kidneys and ureters (tubes that carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder).
- Lower urinary tract- compromised of bladder and urethra (tubes carrying urine from the bladder to outside)

Upper urinary tract infection is quite rare in children, though it is more dangerous as it can damage the kidneys. Infection of the kidneys is called pyelonephritis. Infection of the bladder is far more common and is known as cystitis.

## Causes of urinary tract infection in children

In the vast majority of cases, bacteria residing in the bowel are responsible for such infections. In babies, particles of poo come in contact with the urethra more often because they wear diapers. While in young children and toddlers, genitals are quite close to the anus, thus soiled toilet paper becomes the source of infections. However, the reason may not be evident in all cases.

Some of the rare causes of infections of the urinary tract could be:

- Constipation- can cause the intestine to swell and put pressure on the bladder and thus disturbing its normal functioning.
- Vesicoureteral reflux- a rare condition in which urine may move ureters and kidney, due to a defect of valves in the ureter, thus leading to recurrent problems of the urinary tract.
- Dysfunctional eliminations syndrome- another rare syndrome in which the child does not go to pee even after having an urge to do so. Holding the pee increases the risk of infection.

## How to prevent urinary tract infections in children?

There are many suggestions that, if followed, may help to decrease the risk of developing urinary tract infections in most cases.

- Breastfeed a child for first three months at least; it is not only good for general health but is also an immunity booster. Further, breastfeeding helps to avoid constipation in young ones.

- Hygiene: always wipe from front to back and change diapers as quickly as possible after they have been soiled. Teach children about keeping their genitals clean.
- Encourage children to void the bladder and not hurry when peeing. Some children may ignore the urge to urinate so that they can continue playing.
- Limit the intake of 4Cs: carbonated drinks, citrus juices, chocolate, and caffeine (though not everyone in the medical field agrees with this advice).
- Those having recurrent episodes of urinary tract infections should be encouraged to drink cranberry juice regularly. It is known to dislodge infective bacteria from the bladder wall and help prevent the disease.

In rare and more severe (recurrent) cases, a doctor may opt for prophylactic antibiotics.

*About the author:*

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Dr. Preet is a family physician. He has been practicing medicine for the last 15 years and often sees children with various illnesses in his day-to-day practice. He understands the importance of identifying severe symptoms on time and keeping the environment safe for toddlers and young children. He is also a passionate writer.

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