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Health Issues

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Detecting Urinary Tract Infections

How do I know if my child has a urinary tract infection?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common in young children. UTIs may go untreated because the symptoms may not be obvious to the child or to parents.

Normal urine has no germs (bacteria). However, bacteria can get into the urinary tract from two sources: the skin around the rectum and genitals and the bloodstream from other parts of the body. Bacteria may cause infections in any or all parts of the urinary tract, including the following:

- the urethra (called "urethritis")
- the bladder (called "cystitis")
- the kidneys (called "pyelonephritis")

UTIs are common in infants and young children. About 3 percent of girls and 1 percent of boys will have a UTI by 11 years of age. A young child with a high fever and no other symptoms, has a 1 in 20 chance of having a UTI. The frequency of UTIs in girls is much greater than in boys. Uncircumcised boys have slightly more UTIs than those who have been circumcised.

Symptoms

Symptoms of UTIs may include the following:

- fever
- pain or burning during urination
- need to urinate more often, or difficulty getting urine out
- urgent need to urinate, or wetting of underwear or bedding by a child who knows how to use the toilet
- vomiting, refusal to eat
- abdominal pain
- side or back pain
- foul-smelling urine
- cloudy or bloody urine
- unexplained and persistent irritability in an infant
- poor growth in an infant

Treatment

UTIs are treated with antibiotics. The way your child receives the antibiotic depends on the severity and type of infection. If your child has a fever or is vomiting and unable to keep fluids down, the antibiotics may be put directly into the bloodstream or muscle using a needle. This is usually done in the hospital. Otherwise, the antibiotics can be given by mouth, as liquid or pills.

UTIs need to be treated right away for the following reasons:

- to get rid of the infection



- to prevent the spread of the infection
- to reduce the chances of kidney damage

Infants and young children with UTIs usually need to take antibiotics for 7 to 14 days, sometimes longer. Make sure your child takes all the medicine your pediatrician prescribes. Do not stop giving your child the medicine until the pediatrician says the treatment is finished, even if your child feels better. UTIs can return if not fully treated

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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