



## Preventing Urinary Tract Infections Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women common?**

**Yes.** Approximately 10% of women report having a UTI in any given year and approximately 50% of women will report having at least one UTI at some point in life.

### **I have had UTIs in the past. How do I know if it is a recurring problem?**

As a general rule, health care providers define “recurrent UTIs” as three or more UTIs in 1 year.

### **If I get a UTI, can I be treated without taking antibiotics?**

**No.** Currently, there are no recommended nonantibiotic treatments for a UTI. The best nonantibiotic approach is prevention.

### **Are there any behavioral changes that I can make to prevent getting a UTI?**

**Yes.** There are a few lifestyle changes that can reduce the risk of getting a UTI:

- Voiding immediately before and after sexual intercourse
- Using contraception methods other than a diaphragm
- Voiding every 2–3 hours when you are awake
- Increasing fluid consumption
- Wiping from front to back
- Refraining from douching and using other personal hygiene products
- Wearing underwear with a cotton crotch

### **Does cranberry juice or cranberry products prevent UTIs?**

**Maybe.** There is scientific evidence that chemicals in cranberries prevent some bacteria from attaching to the bladder wall and causing a UTI. To date, studies are inconclusive as to whether or not this effect reduces UTIs. However, there is little harm associated with these products so they are worth trying.

### **Do probiotics prevent UTIs?**

**Maybe.** There is scientific evidence that probiotics may prevent the build-up in the vagina of bacteria that cause UTIs. This may reduce the risk of getting a UTI. As with cranberry products, there is little harm associated with probiotics so they may be worth trying.

### **If I am postmenopausal, will using vaginal estrogen prevent UTIs?**

**Yes.** After menopause the lining of the vagina changes due to the reduction or loss of estrogen. These changes make getting a UTI more likely. Using vaginal estrogen can build up the lining of the vagina, reduce the vaginal pH, and restore the healthy bacteria that normally reside in the vagina. All of these changes can prevent UTIs.