



# Urinary problems in pregnancy

There are two common urinary problems in pregnancy. They are passing urine often and urinary tract infections (UTIs). Bladder infections and kidney infections are two kinds of UTIs. Kidney infections often cause women to be in the hospital during pregnancy.



## PASSING URINE OFTEN

Passing urine often is one of the first signs of pregnancy. It is normal during the first three months and during the last month.

### Causes during the first three months:

- Pregnant women have a larger amount of body fluids.
- Their kidneys work better than usual.

### Causes during the last month:

- The baby presses on the uterus.
- In turn, the uterus presses on the bladder.

## URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (UTIs)

The urinary tract is made up of:

- **Two kidneys.** These filter the blood.
- **Two ureters.** Fluid from the kidneys flows through these straw-like tubes. The ureters take this fluid to the bladder. Now it is urine.
- **The bladder.** Holds urine until it is passed.
- **The urethra.** The opening where the urine comes out.

Bacteria can get into the urinary tract. A UTI can result. A lower UTI is called a bladder infection. If untreated, it can spread and cause a kidney infection. If certain bacteria are found in the urine, you should be treated for a UTI. A kidney infection can cause preterm labor or delivery.

### Symptoms

- Strong need to pass urine
- Passing urine often, in small amounts
- Burning while passing urine
- Urine smells strong. Pain after passing urine.
- Menstrual-like cramps
- Pelvic pain. Lower backache.
- Fever and/or chills
- Feeling very tired
- Feeling sick to your stomach

You can have a UTI without these symptoms. Your urine is tested at your prenatal visits. Too much bacteria in your urine will show up then.



## TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have constant pain in your mid-back or side that started a short time ago?

**NO** **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Are you between weeks 20 and 36 of your pregnancy and do you have any signs of preterm labor?

- Contractions that: Occur every 15 minutes or closer (for 1 hour or more). Last from 20 seconds to 2 minutes each. Come closer together as time goes on.
- Sudden gush of vaginal fluid (your “bag of waters” breaks)
- Change in vaginal discharge. This discharge could be blood, water, or mucus.
- Pressure in your pelvis, back, or in the insides of your thighs. It feels like the baby is pushing down.
- A dull backache below your waist. This can come and go or you can feel it all the time.
- Cramps like you get with a menstrual period

**NO** **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Do you have any signs of a urinary tract infection?

- Need to pass urine often – more so than usual, or passing urine often, in small amounts
- Burning feeling when you pass urine
- Strong smelling urine
- Fever
- Blood in your urine

**NO** **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Have you been taking medicine your health care provider prescribed for a UTI? If so, are either of these things true?

- You are not better after 2 to 3 days.
- You have new symptoms.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**



## SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

### Passing Urine Often:

- Pass urine when you need to. Don't hold it in.
- Avoid or limit drinks with caffeine. Examples: regular coffee and tea, soft drinks or energy drinks with caffeine.
- When you go someplace new, find the bathroom before you need to use it.

### Urinary Tract Infections:

- Drink lots of liquids. These flush the bacteria out of your system. Drink at least 8 large glasses of water a day. Cranberry juice is a good choice, too.
- After you pass waste, wipe from front to back. That way, bacteria from the rectum (rear end) is less likely to reach the vagina.
- Pass urine when you need to. Don't give bacteria a chance to grow.
- Use mild, unscented soap. Dry the genital area well.
- Don't use a douche. Don't use feminine deodorants in the vaginal area.

- Wear cotton underwear. Wear pantyhose with a cotton lining. Bacteria thrive in a warm, wet place. Cotton helps keep you cool and dry.
- Don't take bubble baths if you tend to get UTIs a lot. Take showers instead of baths.
- Ease the pain by taking sitz baths. You can get a sitz bath device at the drug store or medical supply stores. Or you can sit in a tub of warm water for 15 minutes twice a day. Dry the genital area well.
- Get plenty of rest.
- When you have sex, be sure to drink a glass of water beforehand. Pass urine before and as soon as you can afterward. Do this even if you don't feel the need. Use only water-based lubricants. Wash your genital area after sex, but don't use a douche.

If being treated with an antibiotic for a UTI, take all of the medicine. After treatment is done, your health care provider may recheck your urine.