

Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are caused by germs in the urinary tract. Most UTIs occur in the bladder.

Symptoms

- Burning feeling or pain when you urinate
- Cloudy, bloody, or foul-smelling urine
- Frequent need or urge to urinate even when you have little urine to pass
- Pain in the lower abdomen

Call your HCP if you have any of the symptoms listed above.

Call right away if you also have: fever, chills, nausea and vomiting, or pain in the side or lower back.



Prevention and Home Care

- Drink plenty of water daily.
- Empty your bladder as soon as you feel the need. Don't ignore the urge to go.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Avoid using spermicides during sex. They can increase the risk of UTIs.
- Try to urinate before and after sex.
- Drink cranberry juice or take cranberry tablets. This may help prevent UTIs.
- If you are past menopause, ask your HCP about estrogen cream.



Vaginal Infections

Most women have a vaginal infection at least once in their lives. The most common types are described below.

Yeast Infection

Symptoms

- Itching (often severe)
- Thick, white, curdy discharge
- Pain during urination or sex
- Burning and swelling of the vulva (outer lips)

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

Symptoms

- White or gray discharge with a "fishy" smell
- Burning or irritation during urination or sex
- Itching at opening of vagina

Trichomoniasis (Trich)

Symptoms

- Watery, foamy, green or yellow discharge
- Vaginal odor
- Itching or swelling at opening of vagina
- Pain during urination or sex

Call your HCP if you have:

- A yeast infection that does not get better with over-the-counter medication.
- More than 4 yeast infections in a year.
- Any BV or trich symptoms.



Prevention and Home Care

- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting pants.
- For yeast infections, use over-the-counter medication as directed.
- To lower your risk for BV or trich, use latex condoms during sex.
- Get pelvic exams and Pap tests as directed.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

STDs are spread from person to person during sex. This includes any sex that involves the penis, vagina, anus, or mouth.

Chlamydia*

Symptoms

- Vaginal discharge, spotting
- Pain during urination or pus in the urine
- Pain in the lower abdomen

Gonorrhea*

Symptoms

- Vaginal itching
- Thick, yellow or greenish-yellow discharge
- Pain in the lower abdomen or during sex

Herpes

Symptoms

- Blisters on the vaginal area, mouth, gums, or throat
- Flu-like symptoms (fever, swollen glands)
- Pain during urination

HIV and AIDS*

Symptoms

- Flu-like symptoms (fever, night sweats, swollen glands, fatigue, and sore throat)
- Rash
- Upset stomach, weight loss
- Pneumonia and other infections or health problems (these can be deadly if HIV progresses to AIDS)

*Note: Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV often cause no symptoms.

HPV and Genital Warts

Symptoms

- Cell changes that increase the risk of cervical cancer (found during Pap test)
- Small fleshy bumps or white patches on lips around vagina or on anus

Syphilis

Symptoms (these occur in stages)

- Firm, painless sores in vagina or anus
- Skin rash, sores in mouth, vagina, or anus, and flu-like symptoms (fever, swollen glands)
- Serious health problems that can occur throughout the body and lead to death

Call your HCP if you have symptoms or think you were exposed to any STD.



STD Prevention

- Get tested for STDs. Ask your HCP how often you should get tested in the future.
- Have sex with only one partner who only has sex with you.
- Ask each new sex partner if he or she has an STD. Don't have sex if the person has symptoms or has been exposed to an STD.
- Practice safer sex. Use latex condoms for the best protection.
- Ask your HCP about the vaccine that protects against HPV types known to cause cancer.



Exam and Shot Schedule

Exam/Shot	How Often
Blood pressure	At least every 2 years
Cholesterol	Check with your HCP
Diabetes	See below*
Breast self-exam	Check with your HCP
Clinical breast exam	Every 1–3 years (ages 20–39) Every year (age 40+)
Mammogram	Every year (age 40+)*
Pap test and pelvic exam	Check with your HCP
Thyroid test	Every 5 years (age 35+)
STDs	See below*
Colorectal exam/test	Every year, or every 5–10 years (age 50+)*
Skin exam	Every year
Dental exam	2 times a year
Osteoporosis test	Check with your HCP
Tuberculosis (TB) test	See below*
Herpes zoster (shingles)	1 shot (age 60+)
HPV vaccine	3 shots given over 6 months (ages 9–26)
Influenza (flu)	Every year
Meningococcal	See below*
Pneumococcal	Once at age 65*
Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Td/Tdap)	See below*
Varicella (chickenpox)	2 shots, 4 weeks apart
Hepatitis A and B	2 or 3 shots*
Measles, mumps, rubella	1 or 2 doses*

*Talk to your HCP about your personal risk factors and testing/shot needs.

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WOMEN'S HEALTH



Taking Steps to
Feel Your Best



Staying Healthy

All women are at risk for certain health problems. But you can take steps to improve your chances of staying healthy. Work closely with your **healthcare provider (HCP)** to learn more about common problems and your personal health risks. This guide can also answer some of your questions and help you get started.

Well-Woman Visit

Schedule a well-woman visit with your HCP each year. This visit helps your HCP keep track of your health. It includes a health history and physical exam. You may also have a pelvic exam, Pap test, and breast exam. Bring up any health concerns or questions you have. Also, ask about tests or shots you may need.

Pelvic Exam and Pap Test

A pelvic exam allows your HCP to check your sex organs for problems. It is needed every year. A Pap test checks for cell changes in the cervix that can lead to cervical cancer. It is only done with a pelvic exam when needed. Talk with your HCP about how often you should have a Pap test. Also, ask if an HPV (human papillomavirus) test should be done at the same time.

Breast Health

All women are at risk for breast cancer. Screening exams help find changes in breasts that may be early signs of cancer. Keep in mind that most breast changes turn out to be harmless.

Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)

A CBE may be part of a routine checkup or well-woman exam. During a CBE, your HCP feels and looks for changes in your breasts. From age 20 to 39, have the exam every 1 to 3 years. From age 40 and older, have the exam each year. Some women also choose to do breast self-exams at home. Ask your HCP to show you how.

Mammogram

A mammogram is a safe, low-dose x-ray of the breast. It can pick up changes in the breast that are too small to feel. From age 40 and older, have a mammogram each year, or as often as advised.



Menstrual Cycles

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

PMS refers to symptoms that can occur the week or two before your period each month. PMS can affect each woman differently.

Symptoms

- Irritability, mood swings, depression, anxiety
- Fatigue, trouble sleeping, poor concentration
- Bloating, weight gain, headaches, tender breasts, skin problems
- Increased hunger or food cravings

Prevention and Home Care

- Get plenty of sleep every night.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes on most days.
- Eat healthy, balanced meals.
- Limit fat, salt, and sugar.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Ask your HCP about medications or supplements that may help.

Menstrual Cramps

These are mild to severe pains in the lower abdomen and back. They may occur just before and during your period. To help manage pain, take over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen. Placing a heating pad on your lower abdomen or back may also help. For more severe symptoms, talk with your HCP about stronger pain relievers or birth control pills.

Call your HCP if you have irregular periods or miss a period. This is especially important if you are sexually active and could be pregnant.



Perimenopause/Menopause

Perimenopause occurs before menopause. It starts in the early 40s when your body begins making less estrogen. Menopause is when you stop getting your period for good. This often occurs between the ages of 45 and 55.

Symptoms

- Frequent, irregular, or missed periods; bleeding may be light or heavy
- Hot flashes, night sweats, trouble sleeping
- Vaginal dryness, loss of sex drive
- Urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections
- Irritability, anxiety, mood swings, depression

Call your HCP if you have heavy or irregular bleeding. Also, talk with your HCP if you have severe symptoms. Hormone therapy or other medications may be prescribed, if needed.



Home Care

- For menstrual changes: Keep tampons or pads on hand in case your period comes unexpectedly. Ask your HCP about birth control pills to help regulate periods.
- For hot flashes and night sweats: Dress in layers that are easy to remove. At night, run a fan or open a window. Keep a glass of cold water or an ice pack by your bed.
- For vaginal dryness: Use a water-based lubricant. Also, ask your HCP about estrogen cream.
- For urinary problems: Drink plenty of water. Also, try doing pelvic floor muscle exercises (Kegels). To do these, squeeze and relax the muscles that control urination.
- For emotional symptoms: Exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days. Also, ask your HCP about ways to manage stress.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis occurs when bones are brittle and easy to break. The risk for this problem goes up as you get older.

Symptoms

- Back pain
- Loss of height over time
- Rounded shoulders, stooped posture
- Bone fractures

Prevention and Home Care

- Be as active as you can. When you're active, bones respond by growing stronger.
- Eat foods high in calcium, such as leafy greens and low-fat dairy products. Also eat foods that have vitamin D added, such as milk and cereal. Ask your HCP about taking supplements, if needed.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol, colas, and caffeine.

Calcium and Vitamin D

Getting enough calcium and vitamin D helps build and keep bones strong. Try to get the following amounts each day:

- **Calcium:** 1,000 mg (age 50 and under)
1,200 mg (age 51 and over)
- **Vit D:** 400 to 800 IU (age 49 and under)
800 to 1,000 IU (age 50 and over)



Heart Disease

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is the most common type of heart disease. It occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart become narrowed. This can lead to a heart attack and other problems.

Common Risk Factors

- Family history of heart disease
- Being over age 50
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise

Prevention and Home Care

- If you smoke, quit.
- Manage high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes as directed.
- Eat less fat and cholesterol.
- Exercise most days of the week.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Call 911 right away if you have any of these signs or symptoms:

- Discomfort, pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of the chest lasting a few minutes or more, or that goes away and comes back
- Discomfort in other areas including the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest pain
- Lightheadedness, fainting
- Sweating
- Nausea or vomiting

