# Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) – Patient Guide

**What can I do to feel better besides taking antibiotics?**

* Your symptoms should begin to improve within a few hours of starting antibiotics and significantly improve 2 days after starting antibiotics.
* Aside from acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) as needed, additional medications are typically not necessary.
* If the pain is really bad, you could consider over-the-counter products that temporarily numb your private area sold by the brand names such as Azo Standard® or Pyridium® (active ingredient = phenazopyridine).
* Drinking plenty of water helps bacteria leave your urinary tract faster.
* Douches, powders, or harsh soaps in the genital area and non-cotton underwear can be irritating and worsen symptoms.

**How can I prevent a UTI from occurring again?**

* Stay well hydrated – aim for 6-8 glasses of water daily.
* Urinate immediately after sexual activity.
* Wipe front to back after using the bathroom.
* Avoid holding in urine for prolonged periods of time.
* If you use diaphragms or spermicides, you may want to discuss changing your birth control as these can increase the risk of UTIs.

**What should I do if I keep having UTIs?**

* If you have ≥2 UTIs in 6 months or ≥3 UTIs in 12 months, there are options you may want to consider to reduce your risk of future UTIs.
* Methenamine (an oral antiseptic) or cranberry products (juice or pills) are considered low-risk non-antibiotic options. It is better to discuss with your healthcare provider first as there are some limitations on who can safely receive them.
* Topical estrogen is another non-antibiotic prescription option but has some risks so should only be taken under the supervision of a healthcare provider.
* The above agents can be taken alone or in combination, per discussion with your healthcare provider.
* If none of these options help after at least a 6-12 month trial period, your healthcare provider might consider antibiotic prophylaxis.
  + Antibiotic prophylaxis can be associated with side effects so should not be started unless prescribed by your healthcare provider.

**What should I do if my symptoms are not improving?**

* If your symptoms do not improve by day 3 or if at any point you develop fevers, chills, back pain, vomiting, or feel more ill, you should seek an in-person appointment or go to the emergency department.

*This document is intended to provide health-related information so that you may be better informed. It is not a substitute for your healthcare provider's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.*

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