

Why Prevention?

Bladder infections are also called urinary tract infections, or UTIs. They are a potential complication of intermittent catheterization.

Bladder infections happen an average of two to three times a year for people who use intermittent catheterization to empty their bladder.

Bladder infections require medical treatment. You may need to take antibiotics for 7 to 10 days. You will need to live with the uncomfortable symptoms while you are recovering.

The information in this brochure can help you avoid bladder infections and the interruption in your lifestyle they bring.

If you have had more than three bladder infections in the last twelve months, you need to take special action to treat them. See our brochure on Treating Frequent Bladder Infections.

For more information

SCIRE Rehabilitation Evidence

<http://www.scireproject.com/rehabilitation-evidence/bladder-management>

Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research

http://www.gfmer.ch/Guidelines/Urinary_tract_infections_urinalysis/Urinary_tract_infections_urinalysis.htm

Spinal Cord Connections

<http://www.spinalcordconnections.ca/default.aspx>

SCI University

<http://sci-u.ca/beta/player.html>

Thank you to our partners

This brochure was created with input from Alberta-based nurses, urologists, physiatrists and people with spinal cord injury. We thank them for their valuable insight and expertise.

This brochure is a project of the Alberta Spinal Cord Injury Initiative – a collaboration of many community partners, and funded by the Government of Alberta.

For more information on the AB SCI Initiative, contact the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Alberta) at 780-424-6312 or www.cpa-ab.org

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Bladder Health

For intermittent catheterization users



How do you know if you have a bladder infection?

A bladder infection is indicated by a positive urine culture/dipstick along with any three of the following symptoms lasting 24 hours or more:

- fever
- chills
- delirium or confusion
- malaise/lethargy
- back or side pain above the pelvis and below the ribs
- blood in urine
- pelvic discomfort
- increased incontinence
- increased spasticity
- autonomic dysreflexia
- the need to catheterize more frequently

Your doctor will test your urine for bacteria. If the test is positive, she/he will prescribe antibiotics. Always take the correct dose and finish all of your antibiotics. This prevents the bacteria from becoming resistant to antibiotics.

Stay Well... Beat The Odds

Prevent Bladder Infections

- Drink enough fluids to have clear, light yellow urine (1.7 L for a 58 kg person or 30 ml per kg).
- Don't over fill your bladder. A good bladder capacity is 400 to 500 ml.
- Catheterize 4 to 6 times per day. Change the amount you drink and the number of times you catheterize to achieve urine volumes less than 500 ml each time.
- Catheterize during the night if your morning urine volume is greater than 500 ml.
- Try drinking less before bedtime to decrease your need to catheterize during the night.
- Limit your caffeine. Drink no more than 4 cans of cola or 1 large coffee or tea per day. Caffeine increases bladder muscle activity and can increase incontinence.
- Follow a regular bowel routine to achieve regular, soft stools. Constipation can lead to bowel incontinence, which increases the risk of infection.

- When catheterizing, always have clean hands and clean supplies. Always keep the area around your urinary opening clean.
- If you can, do your own catheterization. There is less risk of infection than if someone assists you.
- Clean your catheters thoroughly with liquid Sunlight® soap. Air dry them and store them in a clean container or bag.
- Throw out your catheters after 4 to 6 uses, or sooner if they are rough, cracked or discoloured.
- Eat well and get enough sleep and exercise. A physiotherapist can help design an exercise routine that works for you.
- Have an annual kidney and bladder ultrasound along with bloodwork.
- See a urologist annually to check your bladder pressure, and to look for bladder stones or bladder cancer.
- Taking supplements such as cranberry extract pills, D-Mannose pills and vitamin C (500 mg per day) may help you prevent urinary tract infections.
- Talk to a doctor or nurse who specializes in urology or spinal cord injury if:
 - you are having trouble managing your urine amounts.
 - you are having trouble cleaning your supplies well enough.
 - you have more than three bladder infections in a 12 month period.