



A catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) is a type of urinary tract infection (UTI) caused by a catheter.

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection of the bladder and/or kidneys. Common symptoms include:

- Burning/pain in the lower abdomen
- Burning sensations when urinating
- Fever

A catheter is a tube inserted into the bladder to drain the bladder and is usually attached to a bag that holds the urine. This type of tube is called an **indwelling catheter**.



Indwelling catheters can lead to a CAUTI. Bacteria can enter the urinary tract through the catheter and cause infection.

Catheters can also stop working properly and lead to infection.

3-10% of people develop bacteria in their urinary tract every day a catheter is in place.



The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) was founded as the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) out of public concern for the quality of care in nursing homes by Elma L. Holder. For over forty years, Consumer Voice has been advocating for public policies that support quality of care and quality of life in long-term care settings and educating the public on the issues that matter most to consumers.

Consumer Voice represents consumers and advocates who define and achieve quality for people with long-term care needs. If you are a resident and would like to make a difference, contact us today to learn more about how you can bring about change!



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Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infections

What they are, how to
recognize them, and
what you can do.



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Symptoms

- Fever
- Chills
- New confusion or functional decline
- New pain above your pubic bone or pain around your kidneys
- Abnormally low blood pressure that is new or that you have had before with no other site of infection
- Acute pain, swelling or tenderness of male genitalia
- Pus around your catheter

Urine testing should only be performed when you show signs and/or symptoms of CAUTI.

Odorous and/or cloudy urine alone are not necessarily indications or signs of CAUTI.

Managing Incontinence Without an Indwelling Catheter

Catheters are sometimes mistakenly used to treat **involuntary loss of bladder control**; also known as urinary incontinence.

Toileting programs can help you manage incontinence and gain control over your bladder.

There are several types of toileting programs:

- Habit training: Based on your routine
- Prompted toileting: Based on being reminded
- Timed toileting: Based on a set schedule

If you do not respond to a toileting method, try:

- Temporary catheter or external catheter in men
- Absorbent pads, urinals, and bedpans
- Treatment medications

5 Steps to Prevention: What Can I Do?

1) Use alternatives to catheters if possible.

You can't get a CAUTI if you don't have a catheter!

2) If you have a catheter, make sure:

- The urine bag is kept below your bladder but not on the floor
- The catheter is secured to your leg
- The catheter tube is not pulled or kinked
- The catheter and the drain tube do not become disconnected
- The collection bag is emptied regularly

Catheters should be removed as soon as possible! Ask frequently if your catheter is still needed.

3) Stay hydrated.

Dehydration can be a serious problem. Health complications caused by dehydration can be life-threatening and can send you to the hospital. **Dehydration can also lead to urinary tract infections.**

- Tell staff about your favorite beverages and foods that are high in water content (i.e. lettuce, celery, watermelon, cream of wheat)
- Ask that offering beverages and foods high in water content be included in your care plan
- Ask family and friends to bring your favorite beverages when visiting



4) Use hand hygiene.

One of the most effective ways to prevent infection is good hand hygiene.

- Use alcohol-based hand rubs to clean hands whenever possible
- Wash hands with soap and water when visibly dirty or soiled
- Ask staff and family members to wash their hands if they have not done so



5) Avoid overuse of antibiotics.

Unnecessary antibiotic use can lead to harm and an increase in antibiotic resistant germs. **Ask these three questions about antibiotics before they are prescribed:**

- Could my symptoms be caused by something other than bacteria (e.g., a virus or something that is not an infection)?
- What signs or symptoms should I look for that could mean I might need an antibiotic?
- Can I be monitored to see if my symptoms improve with other remedies, without using antibiotics?

Role of Residents & Family Members

- Learn about CAUTI
- Ask questions about catheters and ask about catheter alternatives
- Report any signs/symptoms to staff
- Always wash your hands
- Remind staff to clean their hands
- Question antibiotic use
- Participate in care planning