

Why are urinary tract infections more common in women?

In women the urethra is fairly short and straight, making it easier for germs to travel into the bladder.

For some women, urinary tract infections relate to changes in their hormonal levels. Some are more likely to get an infection during certain times in their menstrual cycle, such as just before a period.

During pregnancy the drainage system from the kidney to the bladder widens, so urine does not drain as quickly. This makes it easier to get an infection and sometimes germs can move from the bladder to the kidney, causing a kidney infection.

Urinary tract infections during pregnancy can result in increased blood pressure and a premature birth, so it is very important to have the infections treated promptly.

In older women, the tissues of the urethra and bladder become thinner and drier with age, as well as after menopause or a hysterectomy. This can be linked to increased urinary tract infections.

Women are also more at risk of repeated urinary tract infections if they:

- use spermicide jelly or a diaphragm for contraception
- have had a new sexual partner in the last year
- suffer from constipation
- had their first urinary tract infection at or before 15 years of age
- have a family history of repeated urinary tract infections.

If you suspect you have a urinary tract infection, it is important to see your doctor for diagnosis and treatment.