

Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infection (CAUTI)



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What is a catheter-associated urinary tract infection?

A catheter-associated urinary tract infection, or CAUTI, is a type of infection in the urinary system (e.g., urethra, bladder, ureters and kidney) associated with the use of a urinary catheter. A urinary catheter is a thin tube placed in the bladder through the urethra to drain urine. It is often used in healthcare settings if a patient is having surgery, experiencing urinary incontinence or retention, or to improve comfort for end of life care.

How can CAUTIs occur?

CAUTI can occur if germs (mainly bacteria) enter the urinary tract via the urinary catheter. The most common way that germs are spread is through poor hand hygiene. Healthcare providers and visitors can carry germs on their hands and if they should touch the catheter without washing their hands, they can spread the germs that could cause infection. Many germs that cause CAUTI are naturally present in or on your body and normally do not cause infection. If the germs get into your urinary tract during catheter placement, they might cause an infection.

Fast Facts

- CAUTIs are infections in the urinary system
- Caused by bacteria entering via the catheter
- CAUTIs cause a variety of symptoms
- Anyone with a catheter is at risk for a CAUTI
- Testing is required for diagnosis
- Treatment includes antibiotics and catheter removal
- Prevented through proper care and hygiene

What are the symptoms of CAUTI?

CAUTIs can have a wide range of symptoms, including abdominal pain, fever, cloudy or bloody urine, burning during urination and frequent urination. You should contact your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms. Sometimes people with a CAUTI do not experience these symptoms.

Who is at risk for CAUTI?

Anyone with a catheter can be at risk for getting a CAUTI. Women, the elderly, patients with weakened immune systems and patients that need a catheter for an extended period of time are especially at risk.

How do I know if I have a CAUTI?

A CAUTI can present itself in different ways, and oftentimes your healthcare provider will need to perform a test in order to be sure you have a CAUTI. They might take a urine sample and blood culture to determine whether or not you have CAUTI.

How are CAUTIs prevented?

One of the best ways to prevent CAUTIs is with proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. Make sure that your hands are clean before touching the catheter or collection bag, and speak up if you are not sure if your healthcare provider has washed their hands.

Another way to help prevent CAUTIs is by taking proper care of the catheter. If you are going to be using the catheter at home, make sure that your healthcare provider gives you complete instructions on how to use it. Do not tug, pull or twist the tubing.

You or your healthcare provider should make sure that the drainage system stays closed, but when it must be emptied, make sure that the drainage tube does not touch anything. Always make sure that the collection bag is below the level of the bladder, but do not let it touch the floor.

Catheters should only be used when absolutely necessary. The risk for developing CAUTI increases the longer a patient has a catheter, so you can ask your healthcare provider every day whether or not you still need your catheter.

How can CAUTIs be treated?

CAUTIs can be treated with antibiotics and/or the removal of the catheter. Your healthcare provider will decide which treatment is best for you.

The best prevention method is proper hand washing.

Outside Resources on CAUTIs

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information about catheter associated urinary tract infections, please refer to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hai/>

http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/ca_uti/uti.html

For additional information on CAUTI:
<http://bit.ly/IDOHCAUTI>

