

## Conquering Recurrent Urinary Tract Infections

We now know that the urine of healthy people contains bacteria (urine is NOT sterile). A urinary tract infection occurs when abnormal bacteria, usually from the digestive tract, cling to the opening of the urethra and begin to multiply. An infection limited to the urethra is called **urethritis**. From there bacteria often move on to the bladder causing a bladder infection called **cystitis**. If the infection is not treated promptly, bacteria may then go up the ureters to infect the kidneys called **pyelonephritis**. E. coli bacteria are responsible for 75-90% of the cases of uncomplicated cystitis or UTIs.

### How do I insure good personal hygiene to prevent UTIs?

- Always wipe from front to back after a bowel movement or urinating. The use of a baby wipe or similar products is not necessary. If you choose to use one of these products make sure it is for sensitive skin and that it does not contain alcohol which is drying to the vaginal tissues.
- Keep the vagina and skin around and between your rectum and vagina clean by washing with unscented body wash such as unscented Dove, cetaphil or Burt's Bees body wash and water at least once daily.
- Wash the vaginal area and empty your bladder both before and after sexual intercourse.
- Do not use spermicides or diaphragms for contraception.
- Wear panties with a cotton crotch. Cotton fabric lets moisture escape while other fabrics can trap moisture, creating a potential breeding ground for bacteria. Avoid thongs.
- **DO NOT DOUCHE.** The vagina cleans itself so vaginal douches are not necessary.
- Change out of exercise clothing or wet bathing suits immediately.

### What else can be done to prevent UTIs?

- **Stay hydrated!** You should drink enough fluids to keep your urine clear. This is usually around 60-80 ounces daily. Water is best. Colas should be avoided due to high sugar content or artificial sweeteners and irritating acids.
- **Avoid constipation!** (see separate handout)
- **Cranberry works to prevent!** The active ingredient in cranberry is proanthocyanidins or PACs for short. The PACs bind to the arms of the bacteria so that the bacteria cannot attach to the walls of your urinary tract. The bacteria is flushed from your body before the infection can start. This is why it is so important to use cranberry daily as a preventative if you are prone to UTIs.
  - If you like cranberry juice, you will see the most benefit from 100% pure, no sugar added, organic cranberry juice.
  - Supplements that are high quality such as TheraCran are often easier to remember to use on a daily basis than juice and are just as effective as pure cranberry juice.
- **Probiotics** are live microorganisms such as Lactobacillus that are found in the intestine and vagina naturally.
  - Foods containing probiotics: yogurt, apple cider vinegar, dark chocolate, cultured cottage cheese, garlic, kefir, kimchi, kombucha tea, mango, miso, pickles, sauerkraut, fresh sourdough bread, tempeh
  - Probiotic capsules: VSL-3, Ultimate Flora Critical Care, Florastor, Restora, Align, Trubiotics
- Restore vaginal health with vaginal estrogen, Mona Lisa Touch therapy or Viveve vaginal restoration.