

## How do I manage UTI?

Prevention is the best cure

- Cranberry juice — the best kept secret in the world. This juice, readily available in supermarkets, will help prevent UTIs by keeping the urine nice and acidic and unfriendly to bugs.
- Drink lots of water, especially when it's hot. Never get thirsty. UTI bugs grow more easily if you are producing less urine. Drinking lots of water flushes the bugs out.
- Perfect cathing technique prevents UTIs. You can prevent UTIs from occurring by careful cathing.
- Detecting a UTI early is a key to good management. Early detection means immediate antibiotics and knocking over the infection before it gets out of control and into the kidneys.
- You should regularly dipstick your urine with a nitrite stick. These are relatively cheap and available from the chemist or your incontinence nurse. If the sensitive pad on the stick turns red when you dribble some sterile urine over it, a UTI is most probably starting. **Go to the doctor immediately!**

## What if I get a UTI?

- UTIs must be managed quickly and effectively, usually with antibiotic tablets prescribed by your doctor.
- Be sure to finish the course of tablets completely.
- If a UTI gets out of control, it can spread from the bladder up to the kidneys and cause a kidney infection, which is very serious.
- As a result of frequent UTIs, many people with spina bifida have bugs, which have become resistant to standard antibiotics. This will mean a more careful examination of what bug is present (by culturing a urine sample), and the prescribing of a less common antibiotic to kill the bug. The antibiotic may need to be given intravenously (via a drip in your arm). This can mean a hospital stay.

## How to successfully prevent UTIs yourself: a case study

Michael is a 25 year old man with spina bifida who has a history of 'run away' UTIs requiring multiple hospital admissions with kidney infections. In one year, Michael was in hospital 10 times. For Michael, the early signs of UTI included cloudy, smelly urine, fever, tiredness and nausea.

Prevention of UTIs for Michael included a referral to a specialist and urodynamic studies.

- Single-use catheters (not your usual reusable catheter) must be used when you have a UTI and until the infection has cleared.

## What drugs can they help with my bladder incontinence?

- Under the direction of your specialist, medicines can be an important aid in your continence management. The most common agent is *ditropan*, which relaxes the muscles of the bladder and allows it to hold more urine. This means you will stay drier between cathing.
- These chemicals can have the side effects of dehydration and constipation, which are not desirable for reasons we have already noted.