

Overview

Urinary tract infection (UTI) is a common infection that usually occurs when bacteria enter the opening of the urethra and multiply in the urinary tract. The urinary tract includes the kidneys, the tubes that carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder (ureters), the bladder, and the tube that carries urine from the bladder (urethra).

The special connection of the ureters at the bladder help prevent urine from backing up into the kidneys, and the flow of urine through the urethra helps to eliminate bacteria. Men, women, and children develop UTIs.

Incidence and Prevalence

Approximately 8 to 10 million people in the United States develop a UTI each year. Women develop the condition much more often than men, for reasons that are not fully known, although the much shorter female urethra is suspected. The condition is rare in boys and young men.

Twenty percent of women in the United States develop a UTI and 20% of those have a recurrence. Urinary tract infections in children are more common in those under the age of 2.