



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infections

What is a catheter associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI)?

A catheter associated urinary tract infection, or a CAUTI, is a type of infection in the urinary tract that is related to the use of a urinary catheter. A urinary catheter is a thin tube placed in the bladder to drain urine. It is often used in healthcare settings during and after some types of surgeries, as well as in times when a person cannot urinate on their own.

What are the symptoms of a CAUTI?

CAUTIs can have a wide range of symptoms, including abdominal pain, fever, cloudy urine, burning, and an increase in the frequency of urination. You should tell your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms.

How are CAUTIs spread?

There are a number of types of germs that can cause a CAUTI and they can be spread in several ways. The most common way that germs are spread is on unwashed hands. 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 an infection.

Some germs that can cause a CAUTI are naturally present in or on your body. While they don't normally cause an infection, if they get into your urinary tract during catheter placement they might cause an infection.

Who is at risk for getting a 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 a long amount of time are especially at risk.

How do I know if I have a CAUTI?

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

How can a CAUTI be treated?

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

How are CAUTIs prevented?

One of the best ways to prevent CAUTIs is with proper hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. Make sure that your hands are clean before touching any part of 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 place it on the floor.

Catheters should only be used when absolutely necessary. The risk for developing a 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.

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

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/24769.htm>

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