

MANAGING YOUR PYELONEPHRITIS

What Is Pyelonephritis?

Pyelonephritis is a kidney infection. It usually starts as a urinary tract infection (UTI), which is an infection of the bladder with bacteria. The bladder stores urine before it leaves the body.

These bacteria usually get into the bladder from the urethra (tube that takes urine from the bladder to outside the body). When bacteria get to the kidney, pyelonephritis results.

Kidney infections are less common than UTIs, but they're more serious. Repeated infections may lead to scarring. Infection that keeps damaging the kidneys can cause chronic pyelonephritis, which can cause kidney failure.

What Causes Pyelonephritis?

Bacteria first infect the urine and then reach the kidneys by traveling up the ureter or from the bloodstream.

People who have greater chances of getting pyelonephritis include women, older people, and people with catheters, diabetes, or urinary tract blocked because of stones or enlarged prostate gland.

What Are the Symptoms of Pyelonephritis?

Some people have no symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever and back pain. Other symptoms include chills, frequent urination, nausea, painful urination, rib or flank pain, sudden urge to urinate, and vomiting.

How Is Pyelonephritis Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis from the medical history, physical examination, and tests of urine and blood for infection. Ultrasonography or CT of the kidneys may help find an infection. Ultrasonography uses sound waves to see kidneys and is painless and harmless.

The health care provider may suggest seeing a urologist (doctor who specializes in urinary problems).

How Is Pyelonephritis Treated?

Most people are admitted to the hospital and treated with antibiotics put directly into a vein.

After symptoms improve, antibiotics given by mouth may be needed for 3 to 4 weeks.

Pain medicine and fluids are also given through a vein if dehydration is present. For repeated UTIs, low doses of antibiotic may be given daily for several weeks to prevent infections.

If a kidney stone caused the infection, a urologist may take the stone out.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Pyelonephritis

- ✓ **DO** tell your health care provider about your other medical problems, especially kidney problems.
- ✓ **DO** tell your health care provider about your medicines, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
- ✓ **DO** tell your health care provider if you're pregnant.
- ✓ **DO** drink plenty of water and cranberry juice.
- ✓ **DO** urinate when you need to. Don't hold your urine for prolonged periods.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your symptoms get worse or don't get better with treatment.

- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider right away or go to the emergency room if you have a temperature higher than 101 ° F or are vomiting.
- ✓ **DO** have kidney stones removed.
- ✓ **DO** urinate before and after sex.
- ✓ **DO** wipe away from the vagina, toward the back, after using the bathroom to prevent UTIs.
- ✓ **DO** have your prostate checked and get treated if you have an enlarged prostate.
- ⊗ **DON'T** stop taking your medicine or change your dosage because you feel better unless your health care provider tells you to.
- ⊗ **DON'T** become dehydrated. Drink plenty of fluids, but don't drink alcohol.
- ⊗ **DON'T** take any herbal preparations that you may find at health food stores. Some may cause kidney disease.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- National Kidney Foundation: Tel: (800) 622-9010; Website: <http://www.kidney.org>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Tel: (800) 311-3435; Website:
<http://www.cdc.gov>

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