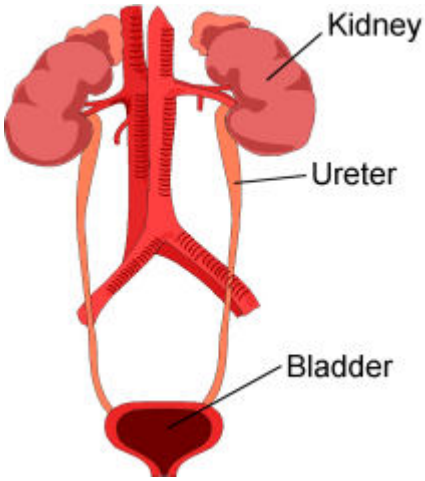
Urosepsis, Bloodstream Infection from UTI

Urosepsis is a severe illness caused by infection. Urosepsis means the infection started in the urinary tract such as from a bladder, kidney or prostate infection. This is usually caused by a germ (*bacteria*).



CAUSES

A urinary-tract infection generally begins after germs (*bacteria*) get in the bladder. The germs get there through the opening in the bottom of the bladder which lets urine out (*urethra*). An infection in only the bladder is called cystitis. If the infection goes up to the kidneys, it is called pyelonephritis. Pyelonephritis is a more severe illness than cystitis.

In some patients with a urinary tract infection, the infection can spread into the bloodstream. This is called urosepsis. The reasons why this happens in some people and not others are not understood. Risk factors include:

- Advanced age.
- Diabetes.
- Weakened immune system, such as chemotherapy.
- Kidney stones.
- A tube used to drain urine from the bladder (*Foley catheter*).
- A recent bladder test (*cystoscopy*).

SYMPTOMS

- Fever.
- Chills.
- Severe fatigue.
- Sepsis can cause low blood pressure, causing you to feel lightheaded or weak.
- Shock, with decreased blood and oxygen flow to your vital organs, can occur.

If this is not properly and immediately treated, it can cause death.

You may also feel typical symptoms of a urinary tract infection, such as pain on urination, difficulty urinating, urinary frequency, or pain in the flank (side).

DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver may suspect urosepsis based on your history and examination. Initial tests will include specimens of urine and blood. Other tests, such as x-rays, ultrasound, or CT scan may be used to determine the severity of your condition.

TREATMENT

Urosepsis can be fatal without prompt antibiotic therapy (medications which kill germs). Intravenous fluids will be used to support your blood pressure. Sometimes other strong medicines are used to raise your blood pressure if necessary. Treatment often occurs in an intensive care unit (ICU). Medicines can be used to control pain or nausea, if present.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take all the medicine given to you until it is gone. You may feel better in a few days, but TAKE ALL MEDICINE or the infection may not respond and become more difficult to treat. Response can generally be expected in 7 to 10 days.
- Drink lots of fluid, 3 to 4 quarts a day. Cranberry juice is especially recommended, in addition to large amounts of water.

- Sepsis can be a severe condition, and recovery can take time. Increase your activity as tolerated, but get plenty of rest.
- Keep any appointments for follow-up with your caregiver or for tests.
- Avoid caffeine, tea and carbonated beverages (Coke®, 7-Up®, etc.), because they tend to irritate the bladder.
- Alcohol may irritate the prostate.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

TO PREVENT FURTHER INFECTIONS:

- Empty the bladder often. Avoid holding urine for long periods of time.
- After a bowel movement, women should cleanse front to back. Use each tissue only once.
- Empty the bladder before and after sexual intercourse.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop back pain, fever, nausea, vomiting, or your symptoms are not better in 3 days.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You feel lightheaded or develop shortness of breath.
- You develop chills or a temperature over 102° F (38.9° C), or as suggested by your caregiver.
- You feel as though you are getting worse rather than better.

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