What is a UTI and how do I prevent it?

UTIs are no fun, as anyone who has had one knows. They can be annoying and even dangerous if left untreated. So what is a UTI? A UTI, or Urinary Tract Infection, is an infection in your urinary system. Your urinary system includes your kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra. A UTI most often affects the lower urinary tract, which includes the bladder and urethra. According to the Mayo Clinic symptoms include a burning sensation after urination, a strong and persistent urge to urinate, peeing frequently in small amounts, urine that appears cloudy, pelvic pain (in women), and strong-smelling urine.

Anyone can get a UTI, but women are at higher risk than men. A lot of people associate UTIs with sex. Some people think UTIs are caused by sex. Sex doesn’t cause a UTI, but it can help lay the groundwork for one to develop if, during or after sex, bacteria gets into some part of your urinary system.

Here are a few tips that can help prevent you from getting a UTI.

- **Drink lots of water and other non-alcoholic liquids.** Drinking liquid dilutes your urine, which means that you’ll pee more frequently. Urinating helps flush out your urinary tract before an infection can begin.
- **Pee after sex.** It’s important to empty your bladder after sex because it can flush out bad bacteria that may be present.
- **Drink unsweetened cranberry juice.** Some evidence suggests that unsweetened cranberry juice can help you maintain a healthy urinary system. You can buy unsweetened cranberry juice at places like Safeway and Trader Joe’s.
- **Avoid using products that irritate your system.** This includes products like scented tampons, douches, and powders. These can irritate the urethra and make you more prone to developing a UTI.

If you do notice symptoms of a UTI make an appointment with the Student Health Center or your primary care physician. To make an appointment with the Student Health Center call (408) 924-6122 or go online at [www.sjsu.edu/studenthealth](http://www.sjsu.edu/studenthealth).

For any questions or comments concerning this post, please contact zoe.whaley@sjsu.edu.