

UTIs: The Burning Truth

Methodology

Survey participants: 1,000 U.S. women, ages 20+, who experience recurrent UTIs (2+ UTIs in 6 months or 3 or more in a year) (July 2019; Wakefield Research)

Results

The cure is what ails you.

Antibiotics are life-saving medications that treat bacterial infections, but the overuse and misuse of these medications has led to a global health crisis, according to these survey results:

- **Rising Resistance: Antibiotic resistance affects women with UTIs. Nearly 1 in 4 (24%)** women with a history of UTIs have experienced antibiotic resistance issues.
- **Four out of 5 (80%) women with frequent UTIs have experienced a negative side effect as the result of taking antibiotics for a UTI**, including vaginal yeast infections (55%), digestive issues (37%) and skin-related issues (27%).
- **Single Solution.** Despite the adverse effects associated with antibiotics, women with frequent UTIs continue to rely on them, and not just for treatment. **More than half (52%) of women use “just in case” antibiotics as their go-to for UTI prevention**, despite adverse effects associated with them. **These women relied on prophylactic antibiotics an average of 4 times over the previous 12 months.**

Tired of the UTI cycle, women are desperate for a solution.

Any woman who has done an online search for UTIs is familiar with the same rote list of prevention tactics – and they’re trying them all!

- **Every Trick in the Book: Despite trying multiple preventive measures, including increasing water intake (77%), wearing cotton underwear (51%) and urinating after sex (47%), women report having 3 or more UTIs in the previous 12 months.**
- Some women are making extreme changes that greatly impact their quality of life. **Nearly a third (31%) of women with frequent UTIs have avoided or limited sex to prevent their UTIs.**
- **Cocktail of desperation: The vast majority (93%) of women who report having 3 or more UTIs over the past 12 months, have used over-the-counter products for prevention, further highlighting the need for clinically-proven solutions for UTI prevention. More than a third (35%) have tried 3 or more products to help reduce infection risk.**

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Beyond the pain. The emotional toll of UTIs.

The effects of UTIs can be more than physical – they can take a toll on a woman’s state of mind and mental health.

- **More than just pain: An overwhelming majority (89%) of women experience some adverse effects and emotional distress associated with getting UTIs, including stress (58%), embarrassment (57%) and anxiety (53%)**
- For some women, the emotional effect UTIs have can intensify. **A third of women experience depression (33%) and sadness (30%).**
- **More than 3 in 4 women (76%) feel they are judged for getting UTIs, perpetuating the social pressure and unfair stigma associated with these infections.**
- Women who are under 50 years old are more likely than those 50 and older to feel judged for their UTIs because:
 - they lack good hygiene (55% v. 43%)
 - they have a promiscuous lifestyle (40% v. 23%)
- Women who are 50 and older (33%) are more likely to feel that they’re being judged for “old age” medical issues being a factor in their frequent UTIs than are those younger than 50 years old (22%).

The doctor is [all] in.

Most women with frequent UTIs (55%) say they’re most comfortable talking to their doctor about UTIs, but doctors aren’t always alleviating their concerns and providing education on UTIs.

- Women ages 50 and older (66%) are most comfortable talking to their doctor about their UTIs compared to younger women (48%), while those younger counterparts are more likely to favor their partner or spouse (25%) than are women who are ages 50 or older (18%).
- **Nearly half of women (47%) leave their healthcare provider’s office feeling negative emotions about their visit, including lack of clarity on why they experience UTIs (30%).**
- **23% of women leave their healthcare provider’s office feeling hopeless and certain they will be back again with another UTI.**
- **17% of women felt they were rushed out of their healthcare provider’s office.**

Given that many women feel they are judged as lacking education to prevent UTIs (29%) and as not being proactive in preventing UTIs (28%), their healthcare provider should be an invaluable resource for helping to erase the stigma associated with UTIs and spearhead prevention efforts and education.

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Content Questions

1. Which of the following lifestyle changes, if any, have you ever made specifically to try to prevent frequent UTIs?

Response	%
Increased my water intake	77%*
Used over-the-counter products, such as cranberry pills or supplements	61%
Worn cotton underwear	51%
Urinated after sex	47%
Avoided or limited sex	31%
Kept a low-dose antibiotic on hand	26%
Switched birth control methods	8%
Other	4%
I have never made any lifestyle changes	3%
QuickFacts±	
Has made lifestyle changes (net)	97%

2. In the past 12 months, which of the following over-the-counter products, if any, have you used for preventing UTIs?

Response	%
Cranberry juice	74%
Cranberry tablets	43%
Probiotics	42%
Vitamin C	40%
D-mannose	8%
Other	3%
I haven't used over-the-counter products in the past 12 months	7%
QuickFacts	
Has used OTC products in the past 12 months (net)	93%

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3. Which of the following issues, if any, have you experienced as a result of taking antibiotics for UTIs?

Response	%
Vaginal yeast infection	55%
Digestive issues, such as stomach pain or bloating	37%
Rash, redness or itching on the skin	27%
Antibiotic resistance, meaning an antibiotic didn't work	24%
Other	1%
I have never experienced any side effects	20%
QuickFacts	
Has experienced side effects as a result taking of antibiotics for UTI (net)	80%
Antibiotic resistance (among those who have had 4 or more UTIs in the past 12 months)	31%

4. In the past 12 months, how many times, if ever, have you taken a "just in case" antibiotic to prevent a UTI from coming on?

Response	%
I haven't taken antibiotics to prevent a UTI in the past 12 months	48%
Once	13%
Twice	16%
Three or more times	24%

(Among those who have taken a "just in case" antibiotic in the past 12 months)

Response	%
Once	24%
Twice	31%
Three or more times	45%
QuickFacts	
Average (number of times)	4

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5. Which of the following would you feel most comfortable talking to about your UTIs?

(Top ranked response)

Response	Age 20-49	Age 50+
Doctor	48%	66%
Partner/spouse	25%	18%
Family member	12%	11%
Friend	8%	4%
Online resources, such as social media groups	6%	1%

Demographic breakout: Women ages 50 and older (66%) are more likely to be most comfortable talking to their doctor about their UTIs compared to younger women (48%), while those younger counterparts are more likely to favor their partner or spouse (25%) than are women who are ages 50 or older (18%).

6. Which of the following, if any, have you ever felt after a visit at a healthcare provider's office for a UTI?

Response	%
Relieved knowing that my healthcare provider could help	58%
Happy to get a quick fix in the form of an antibiotic for my UTI	50%
Confident on next steps I can take to reduce my UTIs	39%
Validated like what I'm going through isn't as uncommon as I'd thought	34%
Unclear as to why I kept getting UTIs	30%
Hopeless like I will be back again with another UTI	23%
Rushed because the healthcare provider didn't spend much time with me	17%
Judged or misunderstood	11%
None of the above	3%
QuickFacts	
Positive (net)	83%
Negative (net)	47%
Any (net)	97%

Summary: Women experience an emotional roller coaster of positive and negative feelings as they seek to find solutions from their healthcare provider for their recurrent UTIs.

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7. Which of the following judgements, if any, have you felt people make about women who frequently get UTIs?

Response	%
They lack good hygiene	51%
They have a promiscuous lifestyle	34%
They lack education on UTI prevention	29%
They are lazy in their efforts to prevent UTIs	28%
They are experiencing "old age" medical issues	26%
None of these	24%
QuickFacts	
Any (net)	76%

Demographic breakout: Women who are under 50 years old are more likely than those ages 50 and older to feel judged for their UTIs. Specifically, they are more likely to feel judged because:

- They lack good hygiene (55% v. 43%)
- They have a promiscuous lifestyle (40% v. 23%)
- They lack education on preventing UTIs (31% v. 25%)

However, women ages 50 and older (33%) are more likely to feel that they're being judged for "old age" medical issues being a factor in their frequent UTIs than are those younger than 50 years old (22%).

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8. Which of the following, if any, have you ever experienced because of your UTIs?

Response	%
Stress, such as from having to leave my house while having one	58%
Embarrassment, such as from having to frequently go to the bathroom	57%
Anxiety, such as from not knowing if it will go away before an important event	53%
Depression, such as feeling alone or helpless because of it	33%
Sadness, such as from having to miss an event I was looking forward to	30%
Other	2%
None of these	11%
QuickFacts	
Any (net)	89%

Demographic breakout: Women under 50 years old are more likely than those 50 and older to experience depression (37% v. 25%) and sadness (33% v. 24%) because of their frequent UTIs.

Survey demographic report available upon request. Email ellura@trophikos.com

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