Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a common occurrence for many Canadians, particularly women. In fact, according to the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Canadian women make about 500,000 visits to doctors every year due to UTIs.

To understand how UTIs occur, you must first understand how the urinary system works. Made up of the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and the urethra, the urinary system begins in the kidneys, where its main function is to remove liquid waste from the blood in the form of urine. The kidneys remove urea from the blood through tiny filtering units called nephrons. Together with water and other waste substances, urea forms the urine as it passes through the nephrons and down the renal tubules of the kidney.

Urine is then moved from the kidneys to the bladder through two tubes called ureters. The muscles in the ureter walls continually tighten and relax, forcing urine downward, away from the kidneys, and into the bladder. If urine backs up or is allowed to stand still, a kidney infection can develop.

Antibacterial helpers
Herbs with antibacterial/antiseptic properties can also be helpful.
• cranberry fruit extract
• buchu leaf extract
• horsetail herb extract

For more information call: 1-800-663-8880 or visit http://www.organika.com
Herbs with diuretic properties help to cleanse the kidneys and urinary tract. A diuretic is a substance that promotes secretions of the urinary system. Increasing urine production is important in order to remove bacteria from the bladder or kidneys.

**Common causes**

UTIs in women are most commonly caused from bacteria moving from the rectum or vagina to the urethra and bladder. It has been found that by supplementing with probiotics containing *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, recurrent UTIs can be prevented.

Something that many people do not realize is that urine should be sterile. It contains fluids, salts, and waste products, but it is free of bacteria, viruses, and fungi. Uva ursi leaf can be used to sterilize the urinary tract, and taking supplemental potassium has been proven to alkalize urine. This helps to ensure urinary tract health.

The urinary system is important for removing toxins from our system. You can find the combination of herbs listed above in your local health food store in the form of a kidney cleanse. This is not only a great way to prevent recurrent UTIs but also to maintain good internal health.

Cheryl Wright, RNCP, RHN, is a registered nutritional consulting practitioner from the Greater Toronto area. She lectures across Canada on nutrition and specializes in digestive care and cleansing.

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**Demulcent herbs**

UTIs often cause inflammation. Use of demulcent herbs, effective for relieving internal inflammation, can help with the painful symptoms.

- couch grass
- corn silk
- stinging nettle leaf extract
- buchu leaf extract
- horsetail herb extract

**Diuretic herbs**

In order to cleanse the kidneys and urinary tract, take herbs with diuretic properties.

- parsley leaf
- horsetail herb extract
- stinging nettle leaf extract
- dandelion leaf extract
- couch grass
- white kidney bean pod extract
- corn silk