What is “catheter-associated urinary tract infection”? A urinary tract infection (also called “UTI”) is an infection in the urinary system, which includes the bladder (which stores the urine) and the kidneys (which filter the blood to make urine). Germs (for example, bacteria or yeasts) do not normally live in these areas; but if germs are introduced, an infection can occur.

If you have a urinary catheter, germs can travel along the catheter and cause an infection in your bladder or your kidney; in that case it is called a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (or “CA-UTI”).

What is a urinary catheter? A urinary catheter is a thin tube placed in the bladder to drain urine. Urine drains through the tube into a bag that collects the urine. A urinary catheter may be used:
• If you are not able to urinate on your own
• To measure the amount of urine that you make, for example, during intensive care
• During and after some types of surgery
• During some tests of the kidneys and bladder
People with urinary catheters have a much higher chance of getting a urinary tract infection than people who don’t have a catheter.

How do I get a catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CA-UTI)? If germs enter the urinary tract, they may cause an infection. Many of the germs that cause a catheter-associated urinary tract infection are common germs found in your intestines that do not usually cause an infection there. Germs can enter the urinary tract when the catheter is being put in or while the catheter remains in the bladder.

What are the symptoms of a urinary tract infection? Some of the common symptoms of a urinary tract infection are:
• Burning or pain in the lower abdomen (that is, below the stomach)
• Fever
• Bloody urine may be a sign of infection, but is also caused by other problems
• Burning during urination or an increase in the frequency of urination after the catheter is removed.
Sometimes people with catheter-associated urinary tract infections do not have these symptoms of infection.

Can catheter-associated urinary tract infections be treated? Yes, most catheter-associated urinary tract infections can be treated with antibiotics and removal or change of the catheter. Your doctor will determine which antibiotic is best for you.

What are some of the things that hospitals are doing to prevent catheter-associated urinary tract infections? To prevent urinary tract infections, doctors and nurses take the following actions.