

From Hesitation to Healing

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I've never faced a health emergency alone before. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, my parents were always there to take me to the ER or doctor's office, whether I was severely ill or had an injury from track and field. However, this past fall semester marked one of the first times I had to confront a medical emergency without the support of an adult. Suddenly, I found myself in a role once occupied by my parents: the responsible decision-maker, tasked with determining whether to seek medical attention or hope that my symptoms would resolve on their own. As someone who struggles with indecision, making this choice challenged me to confront my uncertainty and trust my judgment.

One Wednesday morning, I began my day and went to the bathroom as usual. After completing my morning routine of brushing my teeth, getting dressed, and applying makeup, I was ready to head to my 9 a.m. class. However, as I was leaving my dorm, I felt the sudden urge to urinate again. Initially, I didn't think much of it. Still, I found it odd, considering my tendency to be perpetually dehydrated and forgetful about drinking water throughout the day.

As the day progressed, my symptoms worsened, despite my reluctance to acknowledge that something was wrong. The constant urge to urinate intensified, and each trip to the bathroom brought an intense burning sensation. The discomfort became unbearable, and fearing the worst, I turned to Google. My symptoms aligned with a UTI, confirming my suspicions. Still, I decided to tough it out, hoping it would pass in a day or two.

It wasn't until the next morning, during a Behavioral Neuroscience exam, that I realized the progressing severity of my discomfort. Unable to focus on my exam due to the extreme urge to urinate, I rushed through the test, only to find that

I had little urine to expel. Yet the urge persisted, and when I finally managed to relieve my bladder, I was horrified—it was cloudy, streaked with specks of blood. Fear gripped me, and panic set in. It was then that I finally accepted the reality: I had a UTI and needed to schedule an appointment with UHS immediately.

Ironically, as a pre-med student, I wasn't applying the very principles I hope to uphold as a future doctor—promoting proactive and preventive healthcare through patient advocacy and education. I needed to trust myself and advocate for my own well-being. Ultimately, I realized that having agency over my body meant seeking help when necessary, despite any discomfort or fear. Further research underscored the dangers of untreated UTIs, making me acknowledge the urgency of getting medical attention.

Later that afternoon, as I walked to UHS, I felt a wave of anxiety. Would I be judged? How would they treat me? Would it be a lengthy and inconvenient process? Fortunately, the experience was straightforward. After providing a urine sample for testing and discussing my symptoms with the doctor, I was diagnosed with the typical UTI. I was shocked at the brevity of the whole encounter. In less than 10 minutes, my suffering transformed into a treatable disease. The doctor prescribed antibiotics, and within a few hours of taking the first pill, I felt considerable relief.

Nearly two months later, I experienced a familiar sensation. Waking up with a persistent urge to urinate but unable to produce urine, I again hesitated to accept that I had developed another UTI so soon. However, I recognized that prolonging seeking medical help would only lead to more suffering. This time, I promptly called UHS while my discomfort was still manageable, and received antibiotics without delay, averting another crisis. I was proud of myself for listening to my body and not letting myself endure agony for no good reason.

This experience taught me an invaluable lesson about the importance of proactive healthcare and trusting my ability to recognize when something isn't right with my body. While I may have once viewed seeking medical attention as a last resort, I now understand that prioritizing my well-being is a responsibility I must act on as soon as I realize I may be unwell. As a future physician, I hope to carry this understanding forward—encouraging patients to trust their bodies, seek help as soon as possible, and embrace their agency over their health. Through this experience, I became not only a stronger advocate for myself but also a more compassionate future caregiver, better equipped to support others facing similar moments of uncertainty and fear.