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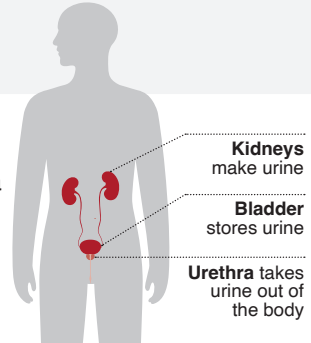
Keep Antibiotics Working

Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

A leaflet for adults

What is a UTI?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) occurs when bacteria in any part of the urinary system cause symptoms. A diagnosis is made mainly on your symptoms¹. Urine dipstick tests are only used for women under 65 who don't have a catheter^{1,2}.



What can I do to help prevent a UTI?

Are you drinking enough?

Drink enough fluids. Regular drinks, like water or squash will boost hydration and help your body stay healthy³. The NHS England Eatwell Guide recommends that people should aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day. Your bladder can be irritated by too much alcohol, fizzy drink or caffeine⁴.

Stop bacteria spreading from your bowel into your bladder

- Keep your genital area clean and dry. Avoid scented soaps⁵. Change incontinence pads often, and clean your genital area if soiled⁶.
- Pee after having sex⁵.

- Wash the external vaginal area with water before and after sex⁵.
- Wipe your genitals from front to back after using the toilet⁵.

Repeated UTIs

- If you are female and past the menopause, vaginal hormone treatments may help^{7,8}.
- If you are male, ask for support from your healthcare professional.
- You could try taking cranberry dietary supplements, D-mannose (for younger women) or probiotics. Some women find these effective. The evidence to support their use is inconclusive^{8,9}.

What symptoms should I look out for?

Signs and symptoms in all adults

- Burning pain when peeing¹⁰
- Peeing at night more often than usual^{10,11}
- Cloudy urine^{10,12}
- Peeing more often than usual¹⁰
- Feeling the need to pee immediately¹⁰
- Blood in your urine¹⁰
- Pain in your lower tummy¹⁰

If you have a catheter, also consider these symptoms

- Shivering or shaking¹⁰
- High or low temperature¹⁰
- Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs¹⁰
- New or increased confusion, change in behaviour, or being unsteady on your feet¹⁰

Urinary symptoms may also be caused by the following

- Pain or discomfort after sex¹⁶
- A sexually transmitted infection (STI)¹⁶
- Vaginal changes during or after the menopause^{1,17}

Symptoms of a UTI in older, frail adults

These symptoms may be more noticeable in older, frail adults



Wetting yourself more often than usual¹⁰



New or increased confusion, change in behaviour, or being unsteady on your feet^{10,13}



High or low temperature^{10,14,15}



Shivering or shaking^{10,15}

Other things that may cause confusion in older adults

- Pain^{18,19}
- Poor sleep^{19,20}
- Constipation¹⁸
- Side effects of medicine^{18,21}
- Poor diet¹⁸
- Other infection¹⁸
- Not drinking enough^{18,21}
- Change in routine or home environment^{18,20}

What can I do to feel better?

What you can do



Drink enough fluids³. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water or squash a day.



Take paracetamol regularly, up to 4 times a day to relieve pain²².



You could try taking cranberry capsules or cystitis sachets. Some women find these effective. The evidence to support their use is inconclusive²³.

What your pharmacist, nurse or doctor may do



Give self-care advice and advise you to take pain relief (paracetamol or ibuprofen)¹.



Ask you for a urine sample to test¹.



You may be given an antibiotic to take immediately or take if your symptoms don't improve or you start to feel worse¹.



You may be referred to another healthcare provider¹.

If you have repeated UTIs and self-care options do not help

- You may be prescribed antibiotics to take at night or after sex²⁴.
- Vaginal hormone treatments may help some women after the menopause^{7,8}.

Advice about antibiotics

- Antibiotics can be life-saving for serious urine infections, but they are not always needed for mild urinary symptoms⁸.
- Taking any antibiotics can make bacteria that live inside your body more resistant. This means that antibiotics may not work when you really need them²⁵.
- Common side effects of taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea²⁶. Ask for advice if you are worried.
- Only take antibiotics if your healthcare professional advises you to²⁷ – they will work better this way²⁵.

Taking antibiotics when you don't need them may put you and your family at risk.

When should I get more urgent help?

You should see a health professional if you have UTI symptoms and:

- your symptoms are getting a lot worse, or not starting to improve within 2 days of starting antibiotics²⁸, or
- you are pregnant, male or you have recently had an operation¹.

The following symptoms could be signs of a serious urinary infection and should be assessed urgently



Shivering, chills and muscle pain¹⁰



Not going for a pee all day¹⁰



Trouble breathing¹⁰



Blood in your urine¹⁰



Feeling very confused, drowsy, or having slurred speech¹⁰



Temperature above 38°C or below 36°C¹⁰



Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs¹⁰



Very cold skin²⁹



Vomiting¹⁰

If you have any of the symptoms above, contact your GP urgently or use the following services for your region.

NHS England



NHS 111
Wales

NHS 111 

NHS Scotland



Northern
Ireland

Contact your
GP practice



Trust your instincts – ask for advice if you are not sure how urgent your symptoms are

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