

Treating your Urinary tract infection (UTI)

For women under 65 years with suspected lower urinary tract infections (UTIs) or lower recurrent UTIs (cystitis or urethritis)

Possible urinary signs and symptoms

Key signs and symptoms

- **Dysuria:** Burning pain when peeing¹
- **New nocturia:** Needing to pee in the night^{1,2}
- **Cloudy urine:** Pee looks cloudy^{1,3}

Other signs and symptoms to consider

- **Frequency:** Peeing more often than usual¹
- **Urgency:** Feeling the need to pee immediately¹
- **Haematuria:** Blood in your urine¹
- **Suprapubic pain:** Pain in your lower tummy¹

Other things to consider

Recent sex

- Inflammation due to sex can feel similar to the symptoms of a UTI^{1,4}.
- Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI^{1,4}.

Changes during menopause

- Some changes during the menopause can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI^{1,5-7}

Self-care to help yourself get better more quickly

- Drink enough fluids to stop you feeling thirsty. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses a day¹⁴.
- Avoid too much alcohol, fizzy drink or caffeine as these can irritate your bladder¹⁵.
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen as advised for pain relief, if you have had no previous side effects⁸.
- You could try taking cranberry capsules or cystitis sachets. Some women find these effective. The evidence to support their use is inconclusive¹⁶.
- Consider the risk factors in the 'Options to help prevent a UTI' section to reduce future UTIs.

The outcome

If you are not pregnant

- If you have none, or only one of, dysuria, new nocturia or cloudy urine, or you have a vaginal discharge (on its own or with any of the above):**
 - a UTI is much less likely¹
 - you may need a urine test to check for a UTI¹
 - antibiotics are less likely to help¹, and
 - the infection will usually last 5 to 7 days⁹.
- If you have 2 or more of dysuria, new nocturia, cloudy urine or bacteria in your urine and no vaginal discharge:**
 - a UTI is more likely and antibiotics should help¹
 - you should start to improve within 48 hours, and
 - symptoms usually last 3 days¹⁰.

If you are pregnant

- Always ask for a urine culture test if a UTI is suspected¹¹.**

Recommended care

- Self-care and pain relief⁸**
 - Symptoms may get better on their own¹.
- Delayed or backup prescription with self-care and pain relief¹²**
 - Start antibiotics if your symptoms:
 - get worse, or do not get a little better with self-care within 48 hours¹⁰.
- Immediate treatment with antibiotics, plus self-care¹³.**
- If your symptoms are mild, start delayed or backup treatment with antibiotics, plus self-care¹⁰.**
- Immediate treatment with antibiotics, plus self-care¹¹.**

Options to help prevent a UTI

It may help you to consider the following risk factors.

- Stop bacteria spreading from your bowel into your bladder. Wipe from front (vagina) to back (bottom) after using the toilet¹⁷.
- Avoid waiting to go to the toilet. Pee as soon as you need to¹⁸.
- Go for a pee after having sex to flush out any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra¹⁹.
- Wash the external vaginal area with water before and after sex to wash away any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra^{17,20}.
- Drink enough fluids to make sure you pee regularly throughout the day, especially during hot weather¹⁴.

If you have repeated UTIs, discuss this with a healthcare professional. The following may help.

- There is good evidence to show that **vaginal hormonal treatment** may help after the menopause^{19,21}.
- You could try taking **cranberry products, D-mannose or probiotics**. Some women find these effective. The evidence to support their use is inconclusive^{21,22}.

Antibiotic resistance

- Antibiotics can be life-saving, but they are not always needed for urinary symptoms²¹.
- Taking any antibiotics can make bacteria that live inside your body more resistant. This means that antibiotics may not work when you really need them²³.
- Common side effects of taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea²⁴. Get medical advice if you are worried.
- Keep antibiotics working – only take them when advised by a health professional²⁵. This way they are more likely to work for a future UTI²³.

Types of urinary tract infection

UTIs are caused by bacteria getting into your urethra or bladder, usually from your gut. Infections may occur in different parts of the urinary tract.

Kidneys (make urine)

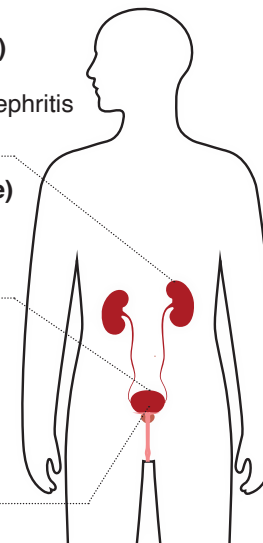
Infection in the upper urinary tract – pyelonephritis (pie-lo-nef-right-is)

Bladder (stores urine)

Infection in the lower urinary tract – cystitis (sis-tight-is)

Urethra (takes urine out of the body)

Infection or inflammation in the urethra – urethritis (your-ith-right-is)



When should you get help?

Contact your GP practice or NHS 111

The following symptoms are possible signs of serious infection and should be assessed urgently. Phone for advice if you are not sure how urgent the symptoms are.

- You have shivering, chills and muscle pain¹.
- You feel confused, or are very drowsy¹.
- You have not been for a pee all day¹.
- You are vomiting¹.
- You see blood in your urine¹.
- Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C^{1,26}.
- You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs¹.
- Your symptoms get worse¹⁰.
- Your symptoms are not starting to improve within 48 hours of taking antibiotics¹.

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