

Other useful advice

The following advice may be useful in helping you keep your bladder and urethra free from bacteria:

- Drink plenty of water (6 to 8 glasses per day) to avoid dehydration and help clear bacteria from the urinary tract.
- Go to the toilet as soon as you feel the need to urinate, rather than waiting.
- Try to fully empty your bladder when you go to the toilet.
- Wipe from front to back after going to the toilet.
- Practise good hygiene by washing your genitals every day.
- Avoiding strong soaps in the bath and shower around the genital area.
- Wear cotton underwear. Bacteria grow better in moist places and cotton does not trap moisture.

If you require further advice/
information, please contact your local
GP or pharmacist.

**Infection prevention and
control is everyone's
responsibility.**

**Residents, staff and
visitors all have an
important role to play in
preventing the spread of
healthcare associated
infections.**



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Urinary Tract Infections in older people

Information for residents



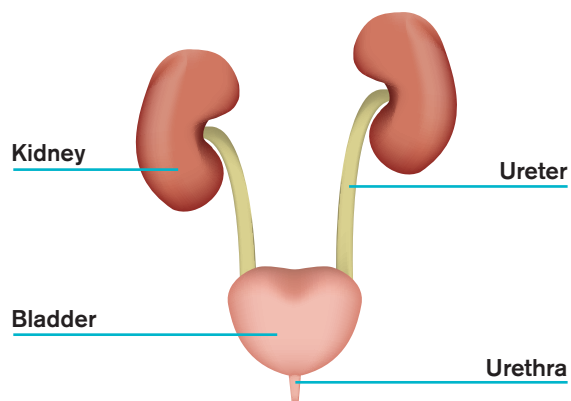
Introduction

This leaflet will provide you with information on urinary tract infections, signs and symptoms and tips on how to prevent it.

What is a urinary tract infection?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection that affects any part of the urinary tract. The urinary tract is the group of internal organs that makes urine (kidneys), stores it (bladder) and removes urine from the body (urethra). See diagram below.

When an infection affects the lower urinary tract it is known as a bladder infection (cystitis) and when it affects the upper urinary tract it is known as kidney infection (pyelonephritis).



What are the signs and symptoms of a UTI?

UTIs are very common. They can be painful and uncomfortable, but they usually pass within a few days or, if your general practitioner (GP) thinks it is necessary, can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics. These are the common signs of a urinary tract infection:

- high or low temperature
- pain on urination (dysuria)
- urgent need to urinate
- frequent need to urinate
- new or worsening urinary incontinence
- shaking chills (rigors)
- pain in side of body (flank) or above the pubic bone (suprapubic)
- visible blood in urine (frank haematuria)
- new onset or worsening of pre-existing confusion or agitation.

Who's at risk of getting a UTI?

Women are more likely to develop a UTI than men. This is because in women, the urethra is closer to the anus than it is in men. Also, the urethra is much shorter in women, making it easier for bacteria to reach the bladder.

You are more likely to develop a UTI if you have:

- a condition that obstructs or blocks your urinary tract, like kidney stones
- a condition that prevents you fully emptying your bladder (it's easier for bacteria to multiply if urine stays in the bladder for too long)
- a weakened immune system, such as patients having chemotherapy
- a urinary catheter in place.

Diagnosis and treatment of UTIs

If you have signs and symptoms of a UTI, a sample of urine should be sent for culture to the laboratory and your GP will be contacted regarding treatment if this is necessary.

Older people often have bacteria in the urine but no symptoms (also known as asymptomatic bacteriuria), which does not indicate infection and therefore no treatment will be required.

If the urine sample is positive, antibiotics may be prescribed by your GP. Older people are vulnerable to *Clostridium difficile* infection; therefore the use of some antibiotics should be restricted. It's important to finish the whole course of antibiotics, even if you start to feel better after a day or two.

Long term antibiotic use (prophylaxis) does not work and is therefore not recommended.