



Say No to Infection Urinary Tract Infections Fact Sheet

What is a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)?

Urinary-tract infections (UTI's) are common infections that can affect any part of the urinary tract. They occur more frequently in women and are usually independent of any risk factor. UTI's are predominantly *caused* by bacteria from the gastrointestinal tract entering the urinary tract, with *Escherichia coli* being the most common cause. Infection due to *Candida albicans* is rare but may occur in hospitalised patients who are immunocompromised or have an indwelling catheter.

The insertion of a catheter into the urinary tract increases the risk of developing a UTI, and the longer the catheter is in place, this further increases the risk of bacteriuria.

Causes of urinary tract infections (UTI's)

UTI's are usually caused by bacteria from poo entering the urinary tract. The bacteria enter through the tube that carries pee out of the body (urethra). Women have a shorter urethra than men. This means bacteria are more likely to reach the bladder or kidneys and cause an infection.

Things that increase the risk of bacteria getting into the bladder include:

- Conditions that block the urinary tract – such as kidney stones
- Conditions that make it difficult to fully empty the bladder – such as an enlarged prostate gland in men.
- Urinary catheters (a tube in your bladder used to drain urine).
- Having a weakened immune system – for example, people with diabetes or people having chemotherapy.
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- Not keeping the genital area clean and dry.

How to recognise a UTI in older, frail or people with a urinary catheter

In older, frail people and people with a urinary catheter, symptoms of a UTI may also include:

- Changes in behaviour, such as acting confused or agitated.
- Wetting themselves (incontinence) that is worse than usual.
- New shivering or shaking (rigors)
- Urgent or frequent need to urinate.
- Pain in the side of the body or suprapubic.
- Visible blood in urine.

DO NOT DIPSTICK!

Dipstick testing of urine is unreliable and a poor indicator of infection in many care home residents because they already have background bacteria in their urine.

When to contact a GP

- Symptoms of a UTI in any gender for the first time
- A man with symptoms of a UTI
- An older, frail person who may have a UTI
- Symptoms of a UTI after surgery
- Symptoms are getting worse or do not improve within 2 days
- The symptoms come back after treatment.

How to prevent urinary tract infections in the older and frail people

- Ensure the resident knows how to wipe from front to back when using the toilet.
- Encourage and facilitate hand hygiene for residents after using the toilet.
- Encourage the resident to drink plenty of fluids, particularly water – so they can regularly pee during the day and not feel thirsty (it is recommended that 6 - 8 glasses of fluid intake per day to stay healthy) Please also ensure that this is documented in the residents care plan.
- Ensure incontinence pads are changed straight away if they're soiled.