# Treating Your Infection – Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

For women outside care homes with suspected uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) or uncomplicated recurrent UTIs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible urinary symptoms</th>
<th>The outcome</th>
<th>Recommended care</th>
<th>Types of urinary tract infection (UTI)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency: Passing urine (wee) more often than usual</td>
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<td>Dysuria: Burning pain when passing urine</td>
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<td>Urgency: Feeling the need to pass urine immediately</td>
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<td>Haematuria: Blood in your urine</td>
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<td>Nocturia: Needing to pass urine in the night</td>
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<td>Suprapubic pain: Pain in your lower tummy</td>
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<td>Other things to consider</td>
<td>Mild, or 1 to 2, symptoms or vaginal discharge (or both)</td>
<td>Self-care and pain relief. Symptoms are likely to get better on their own.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>Recent sexual history: Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI.</td>
<td>Antibiotics less likely to help. Usually lasts 5 to 7 days.</td>
<td>Delayed or backup prescription. Start antibiotics if symptoms: get worse do not get a little better with self-care after 24 to 48 hours.</td>
<td>Kidneys (make urine): Infection in the upper urinary tract</td>
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<td>Inflammation due to sexual activity can feel similar to the symptoms of a UTI.</td>
<td>Antibiotics are likely to help, symptoms should start to improve within 48 hours usually last 3 days.</td>
<td>Antibiotic prescription</td>
<td>Bladder (stores urine): Infection in the lower urinary tract</td>
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<td>Immediate treatment with antibiotics, plus self-care.</td>
<td>Urethra (takes urine out of the body): Infection or inflammation in the urethra</td>
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<td>Urethritis (your-ith-right-is):</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Self-care to help yourself get better more quickly

- Drink enough fluids to stop you feeling thirsty. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses including water, decaffeinated and sugar-free drinks.
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen at regular intervals for pain relief, if you’ve had no previous side effects.
- You could try taking cranberry capsules or cystitis sachets. These are effective for some women. There is currently little evidence to support their use.
- Consider the risk factors in the ‘Options to help prevent a UTI’ column to reduce future UTIs.

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.
- 1. You have shivering, chills and muscle pain.
- 2. You feel confused, or are very drowsy.
- 3. You have not passed urine all day.
- 4. You are vomiting.
- 5. You see blood in your urine.
- 6. Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C.
- 7. You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs.
- 8. Your symptoms get worse.
- 9. Your symptoms are not starting to improve a little within 48 hours of taking antibiotics.

It may help you to consider these risk factors.

- Stop the spread of bacteria from your gut into your bladder. Wipe from front (vagina) to back (bottom) when you go to the toilet.
- Avoid waiting to pass urine. Pass urine as soon as you need to go. Go for a wee after having sex to flush out any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra.
- Wash the external vagina area with water before and after sex to wash away any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra.
- Drink enough fluids to make sure you are well hydrated throughout the day, especially during hot weather.
- If you have a recurrent UTI, also consider the following.
- Cranberry products: Some women find these effective, but there is currently little evidence to support this.
- After the menopause: You could consider topical hormonal treatment, for example, vaginal creams.

### Options to help prevent a UTI

- Antibiotics may not always be needed, only take them after advice from a health professional. This way they are more likely to work if you have a UTI in the future.
- Antibiotics taken by mouth, for any reason, affect our gut bacteria. These bacteria become resistant to antibiotics we take.
- Antibiotic resistance means that the antibiotics cannot kill that bacteria.
- The gut bacteria that cause UTIs are twice as likely to be resistant to antibiotics for at least 6 months after you have taken any antibiotic.
- Common side effects to taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea. Seek medical advice if you are concerned about any side effects experienced.

### When should you get help?

Contact your GP practice or call NHS 111 (England), NHS 24 (Scotland) 111, NHS direct (Wales) 0845 4647 or GP practice (N.Ireland)