Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
A leaflet for older adults and carers

What is a urine infection?
A urine infection occurs when bacteria in any part of the urine system cause symptoms.

Kidneys make urine
Bladder stores urine
Urethra takes urine out of the body

If a urine test finds bacteria but you are otherwise well, do not worry, this is common, and antibiotics are not usually needed. However, severe urine infections can be life threatening.

What you can do to help prevent a urine infection

Are you drinking enough? Look at the colour of your urine.

Drink more

• Drink enough fluid (6-8 glasses) so that you pass pale coloured urine regularly during the day, and to avoid feeling thirsty, especially during hot weather
• Avoid drinking too many fizzy drinks or alcohol
There is no proven benefit of cranberry products
• Prevent constipation. Ask for advice if needed
• Maintain good control of diabetes

Stop bacteria spreading from your bowel into your bladder:
• Wipe genitals from front to back after using the toilet
• Change pads and clean genitals if soiled
• Keep the genital area clean and dry; avoid scented soaps
• Wash with water before and after sex

Speak to your pharmacist about referral to a GP or other treatments.
What signs and symptoms should you look out for?

Consider these symptoms if you have a urinary catheter:

- Shivering or shaking
- High or low temperature
- Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs

New or worsening signs of urine infection in all people:

- Pain or burning when passing urine
- High or low temperature
- Shivering or shaking
- Urgency (feeling the need to urinate immediately)
- Pain in your lower tummy above pubic area
- Incontinence (wetting yourself more often than usual)
- Passing urine more often than usual
- Cloudy urine, or visible blood in your urine
- Confusion, change in behaviour, or unsteadiness on feet

Although confusion is caused by urine infection, consider other things that may also cause confusion

- Pain
- Constipation
- Poor sleep
- Low mood
- Not drinking enough
- Side effects of medicine
- Other infection
- Change in your routine or home environment
- Poor diet
Always trust your pharmacist’s / nurse’s / doctor’s advice about antibiotics

1. Antibiotics can be life saving for serious urine infections
2. But antibiotics are not always needed for urinary symptoms
3. Common side effects of taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea
4. Antibiotics affect the bacteria in your bowel, which may make them resistant to antibiotics for at least a year
5. Keep antibiotics working, only take them when your doctor / nurse advises them
When should you get help?

The following symptoms are possible signs of serious infection and should be assessed urgently:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling very confused, drowsy or slurred speech</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temperature is above 38ºC or less than 36ºC</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very cold skin</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symptoms are getting a lot worse, or not starting to improve within 2 days of starting antibiotics</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
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