



Caregiver Bulletin

Urinary Tract Infections

Bacterial urinary tract infections are one of the most common types of infections.

They are easily treated when found early. A simple test can confirm or rule out a UTI.

Sometimes UTIs are mistaken for more serious conditions.

The people you care for may need you to advocate for them.



What is a UTI?

UTIs happen when bacteria enter a person’s urinary tract. They are classified as simple or complicated. Complicated UTIs might need to be treated at a hospital.

What are the risks of UTIs?

If UTIs are not treated, the infection can spread to other organs. This can cause more complications or even lead to death.



Who is at risk of getting a UTI?

Individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities and people over 50 are at higher risk than others.

Someone can be at risk of these infections if they:

- Use a catheter.
- Use incontinence products.
- Get help with personal care.
- Struggle with personal hygiene.
- Have an impaired immune system (diabetes, cancer treatment, etc.).
- Put off going to the restroom.
- Are sexually active.
- Don’t drink enough water.
- Have female anatomy.
- Have had a UTI in the past.

Learn More

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Sepsis Alliance](#)
- [Nursing Home Abuse Center](#)
- [Urology Care Foundation](#)
- [Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services](#)



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What are the symptoms of a UTI?

Someone might have a UTI if they have:

- Frequent and urgent need to urinate or incontinence.
- Burning sensation while urinating.
- Strong smelling urine.
- Thick or cloudy urine.
- Blood in urine (red or pink discharge).
- Pain in the lower back, lower stomach or pelvic bone area.
- Fever and chills.
- Lethargy.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Confusion or changes in normal behaviors.
- Agitation or delirium.

Some symptoms of UTIs are similar to other more serious conditions. A simple urine test can direct doctors toward the best treatment. Many drug stores sell home test kits.

What are the treatments?

Consult with a medical professional if you suspect a UTI. A doctor can prescribe antibiotics. It is important to always finish the course of prescribed antibiotics.

What are some ways to prevent UTIs?

You can reduce chances of getting a UTI by:

- Drinking water throughout the day to stay hydrated.
- Regular visits to the restroom to prevent buildup of bacteria in the bladder.
- Handling catheters with clean technique.
- Changing incontinence products or soiled clothes promptly.
- Practicing good hygiene.
- Individuals with female anatomy should wipe “front to back”.
- Avoid hygiene sprays.
- Clean genitals before and after intercourse.
- Empty bladder after intercourse, to remove bacteria.

Cranberries and probiotics are common remedies, but research does not support their effectiveness. Consult a healthcare provider for additional prevention strategies.

When should I get professional medical help?

Call or visit a healthcare provider if they have symptoms of a UTI. Go to the emergency room if they have UTI symptoms with:

- Severe pain in the lower back, lower stomach or pelvic bone area.
- Fatigue.
- Producing small amounts of urine or no urine at all.
- Trouble breathing.
- Rapid breathing.
- Confusion or change in typical behavior.
- Rapid heartbeat.