

Urinary Tract Infections



Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are very common. They can be painful and uncomfortable but they usually pass within a few days or can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics. They're more common in women than in men – it's estimated that half of all women in the UK will have a UTI at least once in their life and one out of every 2,000 healthy men will develop one each year. Children also get UTIs, although this is less common.



If you develop a UTI, you are likely to feel:

- Pain or a burning sensation when urinating (doctors refer to this as dysuria)
- A need to urinate often
- Pain in the lower abdomen (tummy)

What is urinary tract?

The urinary tract is where our bodies make, and get rid of, urine. It's made up of:

- The kidneys: these are two bean-shaped organs that make urine out of waste materials from the blood
- The ureters: tubes that run from the kidney to the bladder
- The bladder: where urine is stored until we go to the toilet
- The urethra: the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the hole where it leaves the body (in men this is at the tip of the penis, in women it's between the vagina and the clitoris)

Different types of UTI

You can get an infection in the lower (bladder and urethra) or upper (kidney and ureters) part of the

urinary tract and doctors often describe them as lower or upper UTIs. Upper UTIs are potentially more serious than lower UTIs because there is a risk of kidney damage. An infection of the bladder is called cystitis and an infection of the urethra is known as urethritis.

Preventing UTIs

Drinking cranberry juice may help to prevent UTIs. If you have had recurring UTIs, higher-strength cranberry capsules are recommended. These are available from most pharmacists. Don't drink cranberry juice or take cranberry capsules if you are taking warfarin (a medicine that is used to prevent blood clots).

Constipation (where it is difficult to defecate or poo) can increase your chances of developing a UTI.

You should act quickly to treat constipation by:

(see next page)



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

- Increasing the amount of fibre in your diet (20g to 30g of fibre a day)
- Using a mild laxative on a short-term basis
- Drinking plenty of fluids

See your GP if your symptoms don't improve after 14 days.

Women who get recurring UTIs and use condoms, should try using condoms that don't have a spermicidal lubricant on them – it will say whether it does on the packet.

Spermicidal lubricant can cause irritation and make it more likely that you'll get a UTI.

Treating UTIs

Urinary tract infections usually get better on their own within four or five days. Antibiotics can help speed up recovery time and are usually recommended for women who keep getting UTIs. In some cases, long-term use of antibiotics help to prevent the infection returning. Complications of a UTI aren't common but can be serious. These complications usually only affect people with a pre-existing health problem, like diabetes or a weakened immune system (the body's natural defence against infection).

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- You have a urinary tract infection
- The symptoms are mild to moderate
- Drink plenty of fluids and the infection should clear up by itself within a few days



Choose your GP or GP out-of-hours service if...

- You can't pass urine or feel like there might be a blockage
- You are finding your symptoms very painful
- Your symptoms last for more than five days
- You develop a high temperature
- Your symptoms suddenly get worse
- You are pregnant
- You have diabetes
- You are over 60 years old
- You have severe vomiting (being sick)
- You are dehydrated
- You have been having chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- You have a history of kidney disease
- You have a history of recurring upper UTIs
- You have HIV
- You have sickle cell anemia
- You have cancer



Call 999 A&E if...

- There are no reasons why you should need to go to A&E for problems with urinary tract infections
- A&E is for urgent, life-threatening illness and injury



For more information, help and support visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk or call **NHS Direct** on **0845 46 47**

Choose the right care