



UK Health
Security
Agency



Key messages for older adults

Identifying a UTI: the symptoms

What is a UTI (urinary tract infection)?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) affect your urinary tract, including your bladder, urethra, or kidneys. Sometimes a urinary tract infection can develop into a severe infection that can cause you to become very ill and you may then need to go to hospital.

What are the symptoms of a UTI?

Here are some signs and symptoms you may experience if you have a UTI:

- Needing to pee more frequently, suddenly, or more urgently than usual.
- Pain or a burning sensation when peeing.
- Needing to pee at night more often than usual.
- New pain in the lower tummy.
- New incontinence or wetting yourself that is worse than usual.
- Kidney pain or pain in the lower back.
- Blood in the pee.
- Changes in behaviour, such as acting agitated or confused (delirium). This could be a symptom of a UTI but could also be due to other causes, which need to be ruled out.
- General signs of infection, like a fever, a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery, with shaking (rigors) or chills.
- A very low temperature below 36°C.
- You may experience fewer of these symptoms if you have a urinary catheter.

Preventing UTIs

These things may help prevent you from getting a UTI:

- Drinking enough fluids. Regular drinks, like water or squash will boost hydration and help your body stay healthy. The [NHS Eatwell Guide](#) recommends that people should aim to drink 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day. Water, lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count.
- Regularly drinking may mean more trips to the toilet. If you are having difficulties getting to the toilet or worried about incontinence discuss this with your doctor or a nurse who will be able to help you. Don't reduce the amount you drink.
- Not holding onto your pee, go to the toilet as soon as possible when you need to.
- Keeping up with personal hygiene. Wash, or shower daily where possible especially if you suffer from incontinence.
- Keeping the genital area clean and dry
 - Check and change incontinence pads often. If they are soiled, they should be changed right away.
 - Wipe from front to back when you go to the toilet.
 - Avoid using irritating products such as scented soaps, gels, and sprays around the genital area.
- Washing the skin around the genitals with water before and after sex.
- Going for a pee as soon as possible after sex.

Preventing UTIs for those with indwelling catheters

If you have an indwelling urinary catheter, a thin hollow flexible tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine, we recommend the following advice:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water every time before and after touching the catheter and any equipment attached to it.
2. If possible, make sure you have a daily shower. Do this with your bag or valve attached.
3. If it is not possible to have a shower, ensure you wash the skin in the area where the catheter enters the body with unscented soaps or gels and water at least daily
4. For men, it is important to wash under your foreskin, replacing afterwards, unless circumcised.
5. After using the toilet, wipe front to back with toilet tissue, to avoid moving poo from your bottom to the catheter.
6. Urinary catheter use comes with a risk of infection, in fact for every day your catheter stays in the risk of infection increases. Therefore, long term use should be avoided wherever possible. Discuss other options with your healthcare professional.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs): know the symptoms

Information for older adults



What is a UTI?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) affect your urinary tract, including your bladder, urethra, or kidneys. Sometimes, a UTI can develop into a severe infection that can cause you to become very ill and you may then need to go to hospital.

Here are some symptoms you may experience with a UTI:

- **Needing to pee more frequently**, suddenly, or more urgently than usual.
- **Pain or a burning sensation** when peeing.
- **Needing to pee at night** more often than usual.
- **New pain** in the lower tummy.
- **New incontinence or wetting yourself** that is worse than usual.
- **Kidney pain** or pain in the lower back.
- **Blood** in the pee.
- **Changes in behaviour**, such as acting agitated or confused (delirium). This could be a symptom of a UTI but could also be due to other causes, which need to be ruled out.
- **General signs of infection**, like a fever, a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery, with shaking (rigors) or chills.
- **A very low temperature** below 36°C.

You may experience fewer of these symptoms if you have a urinary catheter.

What should you do if you think you have a UTI?

Ensure you are drinking enough fluids regularly to avoid becoming dehydrated.

Contact a healthcare professional: this could be your GP, nurse, the community pharmacist, a walk-in centre or the NHS 111 service.

How to avoid Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Information for older adults



What is a UTI?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) affect your urinary tract, including your bladder, urethra, or kidneys. Sometimes, a UTI can develop into a severe infection that can cause you to become very ill and you may then need to go to hospital.

Here are some things you can do to prevent UTIs

Stay hydrated

Drink enough fluids regularly, like water or squash, to boost hydration. More trips to the toilet may be necessary, but don't reduce your intake.

Don't hold it

Avoid holding your pee and visit the toilet as soon as possible when you need to go.

Prioritise personal hygiene

Wash or shower daily, especially if you suffer from incontinence.

Keep the genital area clean and dry with these tips:

Wipe from front to back after using the toilet to prevent bacteria from spreading.

Avoid using scented soaps, gels or sprays as they may cause irritation.

Change incontinence pads frequently Don't wait if they're soiled.

Before and after sex:

Keep the skin clean around your genitals by washing with water before and after sexual activity.

Go for a pee as soon as possible after sex.

If you think you or someone you care for might have a UTI:

Ensure you are drinking enough fluids regularly to avoid becoming dehydrated.

Contact a healthcare professional: this could be your GP, nurse, the community pharmacist, a walk-in centre or the NHS 111 service.