

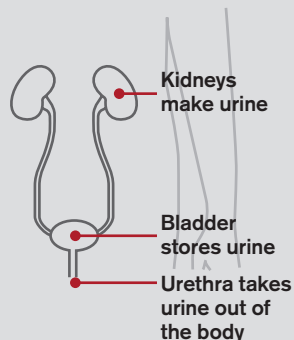
URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

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.

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 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 or cystitis sachets
- Prevent constipation. Ask for advice if needed
- Maintain good control of diabetes

Stop bacteria spreading from your bowel into your bladder:

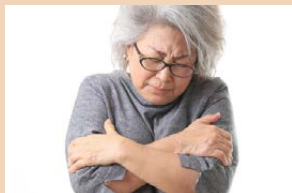
- Wipe genitals from front to back after using the toilet
- Change pads and clean genitals if soiled
- Keep the genital area clean and dry; avoid scented soaps
- Wash with water before and after sex

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

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP FEEL BETTER?

- Drink enough fluid so that you pass urine regularly during the day, especially during hot weather
- Take paracetamol regularly, up to 4 times daily to relieve fever and pain
- There is no proven benefit of cranberry products or cystitis sachets
- If you're worried about wetting yourself, see your doctor or nurse for advice
- Ask for advice from your pharmacist/carer
- Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty and to keep your urine pale



WHAT MIGHT YOUR PHARMACIST / NURSE / DOCTOR DO?

- If your symptoms are likely to get better on their own you may receive self-care advice and pain relief
- Ask you to drink more fluids
- Ask you for a urine sample
- You may be given an antibiotic that you can use if your symptoms don't improve or you start to feel worse



ALWAYS TRUST YOUR PHARMACIST'S / NURSE'S / DOCTOR'S ADVICE ABOUT ANTIBIOTICS

- Antibiotics can be life saving for serious urine infections
- But antibiotics are not always needed for urinary symptoms
- Common side effects of taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea; ask for advice if you are worried
- Antibiotics affect the bacteria in your bowel, which may make them resistant to antibiotics for at least a year
- 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:

Contact your GP Practice or contact NHS 111 (England), NHS 24 (Scotland dial 111), NHS direct (Wales dial 0845 4647), or GP practice (NI)

Shivering, chills and muscle pain



Feeling very confused, drowsy or slurred speech



Not passing urine all day



Temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C



Trouble breathing



Kidney pain in your back just under the ribs



Visible blood in your urine



Very cold skin



Symptoms are getting a lot worse, or not starting to improve within 2 days of starting antibiotics.

Trust your instincts, ask for advice if you are not sure how urgent the symptoms are.