UTI essentials:

Our quick guide to UTIs

UTI INFORMATION SERVICE

THE UROLOGY FOUNDATION

UTIs - Quick guide

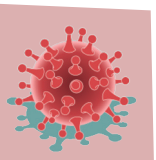
What is a UTI?

A Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is an infection that can affect any part of your urinary system, including your kidneys, bladder and urethra. The most common form of UTI is cystitis, an infection of the bladder.

UTIs are particularly prevalent in women, largely due to the anatomical setup of the female urethra. This shorter pathway makes it easier for bacteria to enter the bladder and cause infections, often leading to cystitis. UTIs can also occur in men and children.

It's important to understand that UTIs are not caused by poor hygiene. Anyone can get a UTI, and they are a common and often distressing condition to cope with.

What causes UTIs?

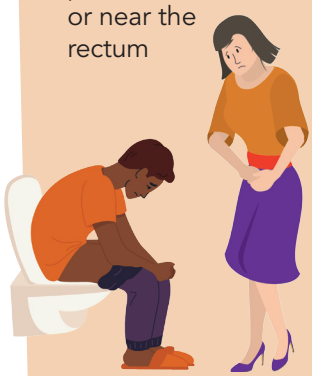


Bacteria entering the urethra and bladder is the usual culprit, leading to these infections.

Factors that can increase your risk include not staying hydrated, sexual activity, certain contraceptives, changes during menopause and medical conditions or operations that can affect your bladder.

How do I know if I have a UTI?

Symptoms vary between individuals but typically include:



You might feel pain in your pelvic area or near the rectum

Needing to urinate often, or urgently, even when your bladder is not full

Feeling a burning sensation when you urinate

Your urine might look cloudy, dark, or reddish, and it could have a strong smell

How are UTIs diagnosed?

A simple urine test can often confirm the presence of a UTI by looking for bacteria and white blood cells.

It's not always necessary to provide a sample of urine unless your doctor wants to try and find the particular bug that is causing the problem.

Medical history and symptoms - Your doctor or pharmacist will discuss your symptoms and medical history with you. Sometimes, especially in straightforward cases, a UTI can be diagnosed based on your symptoms alone, allowing for quick initiation of treatment.

Through a new 'pharmacy first' initiative your local pharmacy can give you a short course of antibiotics (usually 3 days) for cystitis without the need to see your doctor.

http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/how-pharmacies-can-help/

http://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/nhs-pharmacy-first-scotland/

http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/pharmacy/

Can UTIs be prevented?

You can lower your risk by doing the following:

Drinking plenty of clear fluids such as water and juice to help flush out bacteria

Taking time to fully empty your bladder

Wiping from front to back after passing urine to prevent bacteria from spreading

Urinating shortly after sexual activity

Not holding on to a full bladder for long periods

Avoiding irritating products around the genital area

What's the treatment for a UTI?

Antibiotics are often prescribed for UTIs and effectively clear the infection and alleviate symptoms in most cases.

Completing your antibiotic course is crucial, even if you start feeling better sooner, to ensure the infection is fully treated.

When should I see a doctor?

It's wise to consult a doctor if you notice symptoms of a UTI, especially if it's your first experience. Getting timely treatment helps to avoid any further issues.

If your symptoms don't improve after treatment, or if you experience severe symptoms like high fever, chills, nausea, or pain in your back or side, you should seek medical attention immediately. These could be signs that the infection has reached the kidneys.

FAQS

Can drinking cranberry juice prevent UTIs?

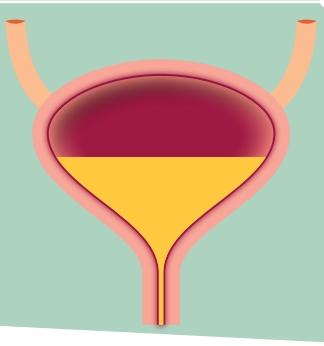
While some studies suggest cranberry juice might prevent bacteria from adhering to the bladder walls, it is not a cure for UTIs.

Are UTIs contagious?

No, UTIs are not contagious and cannot be passed from person to person.

Is cystitis the same as a UTI?

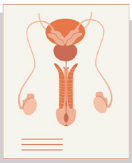
UTI is a broad term for any infection in the urinary tract - including the kidneys, bladder, or urethra.
Cystitis refers specifically to bladder inflammation, most often due to infection, and is one of the most common types of UTI.



What if I do nothing?

It's important to take action if you notice symptoms of a UTI, even if they are mild.

While many mild UTIs can get better with plenty of fluids and careful self-care, checking in with a doctor or pharmacist ensures you get the appropriate treatment to prevent the infection from worsening. Addressing a UTI promptly is the best way to stay comfortable and healthy.

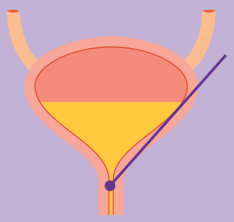


Should I ask for a referral?

Ask about a specialist referral if you are classed as having recurrent UTIs (2 in 6 months or 3 in a 12 month period) and the treatments so far have not worked for you

Glossary of Terms

Urethra



The tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside of the body.

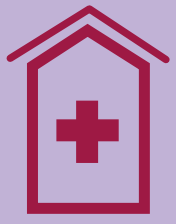
Cystitis

Inflammation of the bladder, often marked by urinary urgency and pain during urination. Infection can be the cause of cystitis.

Dysuria

Pain or discomfort during urination.

Pyelonephritis



A kidney infection, more severe than cystitis, that requires immediate medical attention.

Haematuria

Presence of blood in the urine.

Nocturia

Frequent urination at night.

What is a UTI?

A Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is a common infection that can affect anyone, regardless of age, and involves the urinary system but most commonly the bladder. UTIs are the second most common kind of infection after chest infections.

UTIs can be uncomfortable and debilitating. They can be particularly serious in the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. Early detection and proper management are essential to prevent complications.

What are the symptoms?

UTIs can cause a variety of symptoms, which may include:

- Burning sensation during urination
- Cloudy or strong-smelling urine
- Frequent urge to urinate with little or nothing being passed
- Fever or high temperature
- Feeling generally unwell
- Confusion in the elderly

These symptoms can vary in severity, and early detection is important to prevent complications, especially in vulnerable individuals. UTIs can progress to sepsis, a life-threatening condition. Watch for high fever, rapid breathing, and confusion.

Urgent help - If symptoms worsen quickly or you experience any severe symptoms mentioned above, immediate action is necessary: Call NHS 111 for guidance or to find out if you have severe symptoms and need urgent medical care.

For more detailed information on managing and treating UTIs, please refer to our specific treatment-focused information on our website:
https://www.theurologyfoundation.org/urology-health/bladder-conditions/urinary-tract-infections-uti/

For information on the references we have used and information on further reading please contact nurse@theurologyfoundation.org

Our confidential UTI Information Service is here to help you:

0808 801 1108 **Helpline open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am - 12 noon**

nurse@theurologyfoundation.org

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THE UROLOGY FOUNDATION

www.theurologyfoundation.org

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