# Urinary tract infection (UTI) information leaflet

For women outside care homes with suspected uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) or uncomplicated recurrent UTIs

## Possible urinary symptoms

| Frequency: Passing urine (wee) more often than usual |
| Dysuria: Burning pain when passing urine |
| Urgency: Feeling the need to pass urine immediately |
| Haematuria: Blood in your urine |
| Nocturia: Needing to pass urine in the night |
| Suprapubic pain: Pain in your lower tummy |

Other things to consider

- Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI.
- Inflammation due to sexual activity can feel similar to the symptoms of a UTI.

## Recent sexual history

- **Antibiotic resistance**
  - Antibiotics may not always be needed, only take them after advice from a health professional. This way they are more likely to work if you have a UTI in the future.
  - Antibiotics taken by mouth, for any reason, affect our gut bacteria. These bacteria become resistant to antibiotics we take.
  - Antibiotic resistance means that the antibiotics cannot kill that bacteria.
  - The gut bacteria that cause UTIs are twice as likely to be resistant to antibiotics for at least 6 months after you have taken any antibiotic.
  - Common side effects to taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea.

## The outcome

- **Mild, or 1 to 2, symptoms or vaginal discharge (or both)**
  - Antibiotics less likely to help.
  - Usually lasts 5 to 7 days.

- **Severe, or 3 or more, symptoms and no vaginal discharge**
  - Antibiotics are likely to help, symptoms should start to improve within 48 hours.
  - Usually last 3 days.

## Recommended care

- **Self-care and pain relief. Symptoms are likely to get better on their own.**
  - Delayed or backup prescription. Start antibiotics if symptoms:
    - Get worse
    - Do not get a little better with self-care after 24 to 48 hours.

## Types of urinary tract infection (UTI)

- UTIs are caused by bacteria getting into your urethra or bladder, usually from your gut. Infections may occur in different parts of the urinary tract.
  - **Kidneys (make urine)**
    - Infection in the upper urinary tract
    - Pyelonephritis (pel-o-nef-right-is)
  - **Bladder (stores urine)**
    - Infection in the lower urinary tract
    - Cystitis (sis-tight-is)
  - **Urethra (takes urine out of the body)**
    - Infection or inflammation in the urethra
    - Urethritis (your-ith-right-is)

## Self-care to help yourself get better more quickly

- **Drink enough fluids to stop you feeling thirsty.** Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses including water, decaffeinated and sugar-free drinks.
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen at regular intervals for pain relief, if you have had no previous side effects.
- You could try taking cranberry capsules or cystitis sachets. These are effective for some women. There is currently little evidence to support their use.
- **Consider the risk factors in the "Options to help prevent UTI" column to reduce future UTIs.**

## When should you get help?

- **Contact your GP practice or contact NHS 111 (England), NHS 24 (Scotland dial 111), or NHS direct (Wales dial 0845 4647) if you:**
  - Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C.
  - You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs.
  - You have shivering, chills and muscle pain.
  - You feel confused, or are very drowsy.
  - You have not passed urine all day.
  - You are vomiting.
  - You see blood in your urine.
  - Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C.
  - You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs.
  - You have shivering, chills and muscle pain.
  - You feel confused, or are very drowsy.
  - You have not passed urine all day.
  - You are vomiting.
  - You see blood in your urine.

## Options to help prevent a UTI

- The following symptoms are possible signs of serious infection and should be assessed urgently.
  - Phone for advice if you are not sure how urgent the symptoms are.
  - 1. You have shivering, chills and muscle pain.
  - 2. You feel confused, or are very drowsy.
  - 3. You have not passed urine all day.
  - 4. You are vomiting.
  - 5. You see blood in your urine.
  - 6. Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C.
  - 7. You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs.
  - 8. Your symptoms get worse.
  - 9. Your symptoms are not starting to improve a little within 48 hours of taking antibiotics.

## After the menopause: You could consider topical hormonal treatment, for example, vaginal creams.

- **It may help you to consider these risk factors.**
  - Stop the spread of bacteria from your gut into your bladder. Wipe from front (vagina) to back (bottom) when you go to the toilet.
  - Avoid waiting to pass urine. Pass urine as soon as you need a wee.
  - Go for a wee after having sex to flush out any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra.
  - Wash the external vagina area with water before and after sex to wash away any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra.
  - Drink enough fluids to make sure you were regularly throughout the day, especially during hot weather.
  - If you have a recurrent UTI, also consider the following:
    - **Cranberry products:** Some women find these effective, but there is currently little evidence to support this.
    - **Antibiotic resistance**
      - Antibiotics may not always be needed, only take them after advice from a health professional. This way they are more likely to work if you have a UTI in the future.
      - Antibiotics taken by mouth, for any reason, affect our gut bacteria. These bacteria become resistant to antibiotics we take.
      - Antibiotic resistance means that the antibiotics cannot kill that bacteria.
      - The gut bacteria that cause UTIs are twice as likely to be resistant to antibiotics for at least 6 months after you have taken any antibiotic.
      - Common side effects to taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Leaflet endorsed by:

[Antibiotic Guardian](https://www.antibioticguardian.org/)
[RCGP](https://www.rcgp.org.uk/)
[Scottish UTI Network](https://www.scottishutinetwork.com/)
[BIAM](https://www.biam.org.uk/)
[WHEC](https://www.whec.org.uk/)
[ROYAL PHARMACEUTICALS SOCIETY](https://www.rps.org.uk/)
[ICSH NHS Wales](https://www.icsh.org.uk/)
[CGG](https://www.cgg.org.uk/)
[Crysta Mark 22262 Daily pharmacy Plan English Campaign](https://www.crysta-mark.org.uk/)

Version: 18
Published: Jan 2017
Revision: Jan 2020