

UTI prevention

As a carer, it's important to know the signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI). Below is further information about UTI's; how to spot the signs, how to prevent UTI's and how to treat UTI's.

What is a UTI (urinary tract infection)?

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

What are the symptoms of a UTI?

- A person with a UTI may have signs and symptoms including:
- 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 themselves 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.
- A person may experience fewer of these symptoms if they have a urinary catheter.

Preventing UTIs

- Support those in your care to drink enough fluids. Regular drinks, like water, boost hydration. 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.
- Sometimes people don't like to drink as they are worried about getting to the toilet. If someone you care for is less able to access the toilet, ensure they are provided with support to do so at regular intervals, so that they feel confident to keep well by drinking enough. If needed, a continence professional can support with a continence assessment.
- Help might include choosing the right type of drink that they like, at the right temperature, in the right kind of cup or
- glass.
- Support those you care for to keep the genital area clean and understand the importance of personal hygiene, showering daily where possible, especially if they suffer from incontinence.
 - Check and change incontinence pads often. If they are soiled, they should be changed right away.
 - Wipe from front to back when they go to the toilet.
 - Avoid using irritating products such as scented soaps, gels, and sprays around the genital area.

- Avoid the use of urinary dipsticks to diagnose UTIs in older adults and those with urinary catheters as they are unreliable. In some cases, a specimen of urine is sent for laboratory testing to inform which antibiotics are needed for treatment.

Preventing UTIs for those with indwelling catheters

If someone you care for has 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 people with a catheter have a daily shower with their 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 the foreskin, replacing afterwards, unless circumcised.
5. After using the toilet, wipe front to back with toilet tissue, to avoid moving poo from the bottom to the catheter.
6. Urinary catheter use comes with a risk of infection, in fact for every day the catheter stays in the risk of infection increases. Therefore, long term use should be avoided wherever possible. Discuss other options with a healthcare professional and ensure that people who use them are regularly reviewed by their doctor or a continence nurse.

Taking action

What should you do if you think someone you care for has a UTI?

Contact a healthcare professional, this could be the local GP, a senior nurse, the community pharmacist, walk-in centre or NHS 111 service if you think someone you care for may have a UTI.