

## Urinary tract infections

Also known as UTIs

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are caused by microorganisms (usually bacteria) which can cause an infection in the bladder and other parts of the urinary tract (such as the kidneys)

### QUICK FACTS

- UTIs are not considered an STI
- The most common symptoms are a burning sensation when urinating and frequently passing small amounts of urine
- UTIs can be diagnosed without any tests but ideally a urine sample should be sent to a laboratory for testing
- Occasionally UTIs may be mild and will get better without antibiotics but usually antibiotics are needed

### What is this?

UTIs are bacterial infections of the urinary tract, commonly involving the bladder. They are caused by bacteria from the gut or genital skin entering the urethra and spreading to the bladder or more rarely, to the kidneys. Bladder infections are known as cystitis.

UTIs occur more frequently in people with typical female genitalia, because the urethra is very short and bacteria can pass more easily into the bladder, sometimes from the vagina.

UTIs are not considered an STI.

### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are a burning sensation when urinating and frequently passing small amounts of urine.

The urine may smell and contain blood. Additional symptoms may include fever and pain in the back (over the kidney area).

### How do you test for it?

UTIs may be diagnosed without any tests, but a urine sample will usually be collected to confirm the diagnosis.

Other infections such as [chlamydia](#) cause similar symptoms and can be mistaken for a UTI.

## How is it treated?

Some UTIs are mild and don't need antibiotic treatment. Simple measures can be used to reduce symptoms, such as using Ural® (available without a prescription in pharmacies) and drinking plenty of water.-

Antibiotics are prescribed when there are persistent or moderate to severe symptoms, or both. Antibiotics are often started on the basis of symptoms prior to the test results being available and sometimes need to be changed when the test result is available.

Symptoms usually go away within 3 days of starting treatment.

If the kidneys become infected, you may need to be treated in a hospital with intravenous antibiotics.-

## How can I protect myself?

There are a few things you can do to reduce the chance of getting a UTI:

- drink plenty of water each day
- empty your bladder after sex

If you have typical female genitalia, you should also wipe from front to back (towards the-anus) after going to the toilet.

If UTIs keep recurring, make sure you drink lots of water and empty your bladder before and after sex. Some over the counter medications may help your symptoms.

Occasionally recurrent UTIs are due to a structural problem with the kidneys so you should consult your doctor who may recommend further investigations such as an ultrasound scan.

## Where can I get help?

- Visit your local doctor
- Visit your local community health centre

### DISCLAIMER

This fact sheet provides general sexual health information and is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor.

If you have concerns about your health, you should seek advice from your doctor.

If you require urgent care, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department or call [000](tel:000).