

# Urinary tract infections (UTI)

## Other formats

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## What are urinary tract infections?

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a common infection that can cause illness in babies or children. They occur when bacteria enter into the urinary tract/system, and they can cause children to have pain when they pass urine, or to be unwell.

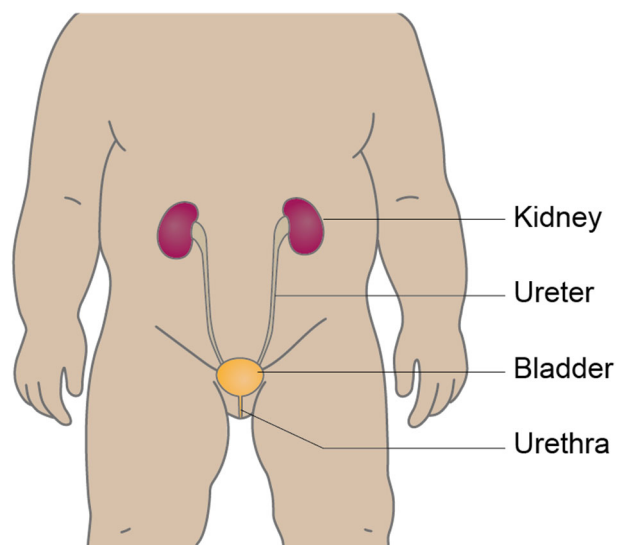
This information sheet will talk about:

- The urinary tract/system
- The signs and symptoms of a UTI, and what to do if you think your child has a UTI
- Testing for a UTI
- Treating a UTI
- Preventing a UTI

## What is the urinary system?

The urinary system is our bodies' way of filtering the blood and removing harmful by-products.

Urine is made in the **kidneys**, bean shaped organs either side of our spine. It passes down the **ureters** to the **bladder**, where it is stored until we are ready to pass urine. The urine is then passed through the **urethra**, outside of the body, when we wee.



## What are the symptoms of a UTI?

- Fever (temperature higher than 38°C)
- Abdominal or back pain
- Burning or stinging when passing urine
- Needing to pass urine more often
- Refusing to pass urine
- Strong smelling urine

Babies can get a wide range of symptoms, including fever, vomiting, being unsettled, feeding less or pale skin.

## If you think that your child has a UTI

Contact your child's doctor.

If you cannot reach your child's doctor, please contact NHS 111.

Red flags to watch out for:

- Your child is not getting better after 48 hours of antibiotics
- They are having fevers greater than 39°C
- They are having trouble taking the antibiotics
- They have stopped passing urine, or are passing much less
- They are sleepy or lethargic
- They are worrying you in another way

## How do we test for a UTI?

The doctor or nurse will ask you to collect a sample of your child's urine.

The sample will usually be tested immediately (dipstick) and may also be sent to the lab for further testing. It will take a couple of days to get the results back – your child's antibiotics may be stopped or changed at that point.

More tests may be required if your child is very young, unwell, or is having lots of infections.

Your doctor will discuss these tests with you.

## How to collect a clean urine sample from a baby?

It is important that the urine sample is not contaminated by germs on the skin or from the nappy.

The nappy should be removed, and the nappy area cleaned with clean water and cotton wool. Put the child on a towel or incontinence pad.

Get the sterile collection dish ready. When you open the packaging, be careful not to touch the inside, and avoid letting the child touch it.

Watch and wait for them to wee. Catch the wee in the container.

You may find it helpful to feed them whilst waiting for them to wee.

## How to treat a UTI?

The doctor will give your child **antibiotics**, medicines that kill bacteria. They will decide if these antibiotics can be given by the mouth, or intravenously in hospital. Early treatment will help prevent them becoming unwell and needing to go to hospital.

At home you can give your child paracetamol for the pain and fever. You should make sure that they are drinking plenty of fluids, and keep an eye out for the red flags above.

## How to prevent a UTI?

There are things that you can do to reduce their chance of getting a UTI.

- Encourage them to drink plenty of fluids, particularly water.
- Encourage them to pass urine regularly every 3 or 4 hours throughout the day, and to go before bed.
- Change your baby's nappies regularly.
- Help them to avoid constipation – plenty of fluids and fresh fruit. Ask your doctor if you think your child needs laxatives.
- Encourage girls to wipe their bottom from front to back.

Some children may get frequent UTIs, or have a problem with their urinary system that means they get more UTIs than normal. One of these problems is **vesicoureteral reflux**, where urine goes the wrong way out of the bladder up towards the kidneys.

These children are often started on prophylactic antibiotics, a low dose of antibiotics they take every day to help prevent infections developing.

## Further information

For more information about UTIs and other kidney problems, visit [www.infokid.org.uk/urinary-tract-infection-uti](http://www.infokid.org.uk/urinary-tract-infection-uti)

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## **Have your say**

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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