

What You Should Know about Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

What is a UTI?

A UTI is an infection caused by bacteria that occurs in any part of the urinary system, such as the urethra, bladder, ureters and kidneys.

What are the symptoms of a UTI?

- Burning or pain with urination (the strongest sign of a UTI)
- Pain in the lower abdomen or back
- Increase in how often one urinates
- Frequent urges to urinate
- Blood in the urine

Fever may or may not be present in addition to these symptoms.

Should a urine specimen be collected to determine if you have a UTI if you do not have symptoms?

No. The symptoms listed above should be present before collecting a urine specimen.

Is a change in mental status, fatigue, or a fall a symptom of a UTI?

No. A change in mental status (i.e. confusion), fatigue (i.e. more tired), or a fall may be due to other causes, such as pain, depression, constipation, dehydration, poor sleep, or medication side effects. You should be evaluated by a health care worker to assess your health status.

I was given antibiotics before, but why not now?

In the past, doctors were taught to prescribe antibiotics for a positive urine specimen, even when symptoms of infection were not present. However, current research shows this is not correct. You should not receive antibiotics when you have no symptoms of a UTI.

What is asymptomatic bacteriuria?

Asymptomatic bacteriuria is the presence of bacteria in the urine without any symptoms of a UTI. Asymptomatic bacteriuria is found in up to half of long-term care residents.

What is the treatment for asymptomatic bacteriuria?

None. Research has shown that there is no need to take antibiotics for asymptomatic bacteriuria. You should drink plenty of fluids and make sure you empty your bladder completely to lower your risk of getting a UTI.

What are the risks of antibiotics?

If you use antibiotics when you don't need them, they may not work when you get sick. Other problems that can occur from taking antibiotics are allergic reactions, side effects (e.g. upset stomach), drug interactions, and *C. difficile* infection.

Asymptomatic bacteriuria is frequently mistaken for a urinary tract infection. It is important to understand the differences to avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics and potential harm.