

Auckland Sexual Health Service
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What is a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

- A urinary tract infection is caused by bacterial infection of the urinary tract.
- The bladder is most commonly affected so a UTI is also sometimes called cystitis (cystitis means inflammation of the bladder).
- Rarely infection can spread to the kidneys (known as pyelonephritis).

How do I know if I have a UTI?

- The symptoms can include:
 - A burning or painful feeling during or immediately after passing urine (peeing).
 - A need to pass urine urgently.
 - Passing small amounts of urine more frequently.
 - Smelly urine.
 - Tummy pain usually in the pubic area.
 - Getting out of bed many times to pass urine at night.
 - Pain / ache in the back / loin area over the kidneys may indicate that the infection is in the kidneys (pyelonephritis).
- Similar symptoms can also be caused by physical irritation of the water passage (urethra) by:
 - Sexual intercourse.
 - Chemicals, e.g. soaps or perfumes, vaginal hygiene sprays.
 - Ulcers or inflammation near the urethra.
 - Sexually transmitted infections like Chlamydia.

What causes a UTI?

- A variety of factors may cause the bladder to become infected. They include:
 - Bacteria making their way into the bladder via the urethra. These bacteria are commonly from the anal area. This is why it is important for women to wipe from the front to the back after a bowel motion.
 - Sex can trigger a UTI as bacteria are pushed into the urethra during vaginal sex.
 - Some anatomical problems in the kidneys or bladder can also make a person more receptive to UTIs.
- Women have a shorter urethra than men and are therefore more prone to getting a UTI.
- UTIs in men are unusual and need additional investigation.

How is a UTI Diagnosed?

- A UTI is diagnosed by having a clinician assess your symptoms and by doing a mid-stream urine test.
- The urine is tested for bacteria and other indicators of infection.
- It is sometimes necessary to repeat the urine test a few weeks after treatment is completed to ensure the infection has resolved.

How is a UTI treated?

- A course of antibiotic tablets are needed to treat the bacteria causing the UTI.
- The discomfort caused by a UTI can be managed by:
 - Using a urine alkaliniser e.g. 1 teaspoon of Bicarbonate of Soda in a glass of water or Ural sachets/Citravescent helps reduce the burning and stinging.
 - Good fluid intake 1.5 to 2 litres of water per day.
- You may require further investigations if symptoms do not resolve, any pain develops in the back, or you get recurrent UTIs.

How to prevent UTIs?

- Avoid delaying urination, 'don't hold on', and ensure the bladder is as empty as possible.
- Women should always wipe from the vagina to the anus (from front to back) after urinating.
- If UTIs are triggered by intercourse, urinating before and after sex can help remove bacteria from the urethra.
- Drinking plenty of water (1.5 to 2 litres a day) regularly flushes bacteria out of the urethra and bladder.