



Urinary Tract Infection in Women

Patient information leaflet



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Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your condition.

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) develop when bacteria infect the bladder. The bacteria often come from poo and reach the bladder by entering the urethra (tube that carries pee from the bladder to the outside). Infections that spread from the bladder to the kidneys can damage the kidneys or cause sepsis (blood poisoning).

Most UTIs get better on their own within 5 to 7 days.

Symptoms may include:

- pain, burning or tingling when peeing
- needing to pee more often than usual
- having a strong need to pee immediately
- pee that looks cloudy, or has a different colour or smell
- blood in your pee
- peeing more at night
- tummy or back pain, just under the ribs
- a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery
- a very low temperature (below 36°C)

Instead, or as well, people who have problems with learning, memory or concentration may be:

- agitated or confused
- drowsy and sluggish
- unable to carry out their usual daily activities as well as they usually can



Treatment and Prevention

It will depend on your symptoms, but your pharmacist may suggest that you have a urine (pee) dipstick test to help them choose the best treatment for you. The urine dipstick test shows up substances that suggest you have a UTI, including small amounts of blood.

If there is blood in your pee, your pharmacist will advise that you come back to the pharmacy 6 weeks after you have finished your treatment. There is more information on having blood in your pee below – see 'Haematuria (blood in your pee)'.

Symptom relief and lifestyle changes

To ease your symptoms when you have a UTI:

- rest
- drink plenty of water or fluids (aim for 6 to 8 glasses a day) so that you pee regularly during the day, and your pee is pale coloured
- avoid having sex – this could make your symptoms worse



Treatment and Prevention

If you already have an infection, there is no evidence that cranberry products or cystitis sachets will help.

To stop the UTI coming back:

- wipe from front (vagina) to back (bottom) when you use the toilet
- pee when you need to – do not delay
- take your time when you pee so that you empty your bladder fully
- change sanitary or incontinence pads soon after they are soiled
- wear cotton or breathable underwear
- keep your genital area clean and dry
- wash your genital area with warm water, including before and after sex – do not douche or use scented soap
- if you use condoms or a diaphragm/cap, use non-spermicidal lube on them not spermicidal lube (or use other contraception)
- pee as soon as possible after sex

Staying hydrated

- drink plenty of fluids, particularly water
- avoid having a lot of alcohol or caffeinated drinks (they may irritate your bladder)
- avoid having lots of sugary drinks or food (they may help bacteria to grow)

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you.

Pain relief

Your pharmacist may recommend taking **ibuprofen** or **paracetamol** regularly to help with the pain and to bring down your temperature if it is high. As well as making you feel more comfortable, this may allow your body to clear the infection itself, without antibiotics.

Tell your pharmacist if you are taking warfarin and intend to take paracetamol regularly as well.

If you take ibuprofen regularly, take it with or after food.

Antibiotics

Often, your body will be able to clear a UTI itself within a week and you will not need an antibiotic to help by killing bacteria. This is preferred because:

- antibiotics have side effects such as diarrhoea, feeling sick and rashes
- taking antibiotics when they are not really needed can make the bacteria more resistant, so the antibiotics may not work as well if you need them in the future

If your pharmacist does **not** recommend antibiotics for your UTI, go back to the pharmacy if you do not feel better within 2 days, or before then if you start to feel worse. Check the 'when to get help' section below for what to do if you start to develop more serious symptoms.



Treatment and Prevention

If your pharmacist recommends antibiotic treatment, they may suggest a 3-day course of **nitrofurantoin** or **trimethoprim**.

Alternatively, your pharmacist may give you a back-up supply of **nitrofurantoin** or **trimethoprim**. In this case, only start to take your antibiotic if you do not feel better within 2 days, or if you start to feel worse. If you do not use the antibiotic your pharmacist has given you, please return it to the pharmacy when you are better.

Nitrofurantoin comes as capsules. Take the **nitrofurantoin** with or after food or a snack and try to space the doses evenly throughout the day.

Trimethoprim comes as tablets or a liquid. You can take **trimethoprim** with or without food.

You should start to feel better within 2 days of starting the antibiotic, but complete the course even if you feel well.

Haematuria (blood in your pee)

Having UTI symptoms **and** blood that you can see in your pee does not always mean that you have a UTI.

If you could see blood in your pee before starting your antibiotic treatment, and you can still see blood in your pee when you have finished your antibiotics:

- make an appointment to see your GP straightaway (if possible, the day after you finish your antibiotics) to make sure that the blood in your urine was caused by a UTI and not something else

If you could see blood in your pee before starting your antibiotics (or the dipstick test your pharmacist gave you showed that it was there) and you do not see blood in your pee when you have finished your treatment:

- return to the pharmacy 6 weeks after finishing your treatment, or see your GP if you have UTI symptoms during those 6 weeks

Your pharmacist may give you a dipstick test when you return to check that your pee does not have blood in it anymore.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you are concerned about any side effects from your treatment, report it to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).



When to Get Help

Contact your GP if you have:

- taken your antibiotic for 2 days but your symptoms have not improved, or are worse
- completed your course of antibiotics but your symptoms have come back

Call 111 or contact your GP urgently if, after seeing your pharmacist, you:

- have tummy or back pain, just under the ribs
- have blood in your pee
- feel hot and shivery, or have a high temperature of 37.9°C or more
- have a very low temperature below 36°C
- have aching muscles or flu-like symptoms
- feel sick, or are being sick
- have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy

It does not matter whether these symptoms are new, they will not go away, or they have become worse, call 111 or contact your GP urgently.

Your GP will need to check that the infection has not spread to your kidneys.

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- you are finding it hard to breathe – look for
 - breathing quickly
 - turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth
 - the skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath
- you have severe symptoms, or symptoms that are getting worse fast
- you feel confused, drowsy, or have slurred speech
- your skin is very cold, blotchy, or a strange colour, or you develop a rash that does not fade when you roll a glass over it (as with meningitis)
- you have blood clots in your pee that are nothing to do with having your period

Some of these symptoms may mean that you have sepsis.

If you are worried that your condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



More information

For more information on UTIs, or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/u/article/urinarytractinfection>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/kidney-urinary-tract/urinary-tract-infections>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

TARGET: [treating your UTI Public Health Wales Leaflet](#)

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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