

UTI Program: Frequently asked questions for residents and families

FAST FACTS

Finding bacteria in the urine is common in the elderly and does not always cause problems or need treatment with antibiotics. Bacteria in the urine without symptoms of an infection is called asymptomatic bacteriuria.

Antibiotics are often given to residents of long-term care homes who have asymptomatic bacteriuria, but antibiotics are not needed in these cases.

Treating someone unnecessarily with antibiotics can lead to harms, such as side effects, adverse drug interactions and infection with bacteria called *Clostridium difficile*.

What are the signs of a possible urinary tract infection? When you have a urinary tract infection it may hurt or burn when you pass urine. It may be hard to urinate, or you may feel the need to urinate more often. You may have a fever or, less commonly, blood in your urine. You may have pain in your side, lower stomach or lower back.

What are NOT signs of a urinary tract infection? Any one of the above signs by itself does not mean you have a urinary tract infection. If you become disoriented, it does not always mean you have a urinary tract infection. Smelly or cloudy urine does not mean you have a urinary tract infection. Other medical problems may cause changes in your urine. Certain foods and medications may also cause changes in how your urine looks or smells.

How will a possible urinary tract infection be managed? When you have signs of a urinary tract infection, your urine will be collected and sent to the laboratory for testing. Your doctor or nurse practitioner may wait for the results of your urine test before they decide about treatment, and they may encourage you to drink more water or other clear fluids while you wait.

You will be closely monitored during this time. A period of “watchful waiting” is an appropriate step to take and will not cause you any serious issues. If you are found to have a urinary tract infection, then you will be given antibiotics.

How can you help? Antibiotics are not harmless. Please support your doctor or nurse practitioner in using antibiotics only when you have a true infection.

If you have more questions or if your symptoms are getting worse, talk with your health care provider.