What is a urinary tract infection?
Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a group of infections of the urinary tract.
The most common UTI is cystitis, which is an infection of the bladder (where urine is stored). Other UTIs involve the urethra (urethritis) or kidneys (pyelonephritis).

What are the symptoms?
- Stinging or burning when passing urine.
- Passing very small amounts of urine.
- Feeling the need or ‘urge’ to pass urine frequently.
- Feeling that the bladder is still full after passing urine.
- Smelly, cloudy, dark or bloody urine.
- Pain low down in the abdomen or in the lower back or sides.
- Feeling unwell with nausea and fever.
- In children the symptoms may be vague and commonly include vomiting, fever and abdominal pain.

Treatment
- A urine sample is necessary to test for infection.
- Antibiotics are used to treat the infection. You should take the full course even if you are feeling better, as some bacteria may still be active.
- Urinary Alkalinisers (such as Citralite, Citravescent or Ural sachets) can help improve symptoms such as stinging. You can buy these products at a pharmacy and some supermarkets. Please check with your doctor or pharmacist if these can be taken with any other medications you (or your child, if being treated for a UTI) may be taking.

Home care
- Make sure you completely empty your bladder each time you urinate.
- Women should wipe from front to back after going to the toilet.
- Get plenty of rest to give your body a chance to fight the infection.
- If you have pain, take mild painkillers, such as paracetamol. If treating a child, carefully check the label for the correct dose and make sure you are not giving your child any other products containing paracetamol (such as some cough medicines and cold and flu preparations).
- Place a warm pack, such as a wheat bag or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel, on your abdomen or back to help relieve pain.

What to expect
While cystitis can be very uncomfortable, it is easy to treat with antibiotics. Antibiotics act quickly and the symptoms often improve within two days. Other UTIs may need a longer course of antibiotics.
Cabrini Emergency Department (ED) is staffed by experienced emergency doctors and nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. If you have any questions about your ED treatment our qualified ED staff can be contacted on 9508 1500 at any time. If you need to return to Cabrini ED for ongoing care we would be glad to take care of you again and if this occurs within a week of your initial consultation the doctor’s fee will be bulk-billed.

In a medical emergency return to Cabrini ED if it is safe to do so or go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

See your local doctor or health care professional or return to Cabrini Emergency Department if you do not get better, even if you have taken antibiotics. This includes having symptoms such as:

- severe pain in your back and/or loin
- fever or chills
- nausea or vomiting
- blood in your urine.

Can cystitis happen again?

Some people (including children) are likely to suffer from cystitis more than once. There are many reasons why this may happen, ranging from poor toilet habits (such as wiping from back to front - which transfers bacteria from your bowel to the opening of the urethra) to having a shorter urethra than normal.

If an infection comes back, it should be treated early. See your local doctor promptly if your symptoms return.

If infections are an ongoing problem you may need to see a urologist (a doctor who specialises in urinary problems) for further treatment. Some people need to take antibiotics every day to prevent repeat infections.

Prevention

- Here are some simple ways you can try to help prevent another UTI.
- Drink plenty of water and encourage children to do the same.
- Pass urine often, empty your bladder completely and do not ‘hold on’ when you need to go. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Cranberry juice or capsules may help to prevent future infections if taken every day. They stop the bacteria from sticking to the walls of the bladder. Tell your doctor if you are taking cranberry supplements as they may interfere with some antibiotics. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the use of cranberry capsules before you give them to your child.

Advice for women

- Wipe yourself from front to back after going to the toilet.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Avoid synthetic or tight-fitting clothing such as jeans or pantyhose.
- Avoid using soap or perfumed products on your genitals.
- Use a lubricant during sex.

Want to know more?

- Contact Cabrini ED on 9508 1500
- Ask your local doctor or health care professional.
- Visit the Better Health Channel  
  www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Notes:

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