

Urine Testing and When to Treat a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are also called bladder or kidney infections. UTIs are usually treated with antibiotics which kill germs (bacteria). Bacteria can become resistant to antibiotics (they can't be killed by antibiotics anymore), so you should only use antibiotics when you have an infection. Because antibiotics have side effects, they should only be used when you have a UTI.

You can have bacteria in your urine even if you don't have a UTI. This bacteria doesn't need to be treated.

See your healthcare provider if you've been taking antibiotics for 2 days and your symptoms aren't getting better.



Symptoms

The main symptoms of a UTI can include one or more of the following:

- A burning feeling when you pee (urinate or pass water).
- Feeling like you have to urinate often.
- Fever/chills.
- Pain in the lower belly (abdomen) or back.



Testing

Your healthcare provider will likely test your urine:

- When you have symptoms of a UTI (listed above).
- Before some bladder or kidney procedures.
- When you're pregnant.



No Testing

Your healthcare provider will not test your urine:

- When you do not have symptoms of a UTI.
- When your urine changes colour or has a smell with no UTI symptoms.
Cloudy or smelly urine usually means you need to drink more fluids.



When your health changes with no signs of a UTI

In older people, changes in your mood, balance, or how much energy you have, are not caused by a UTI.

Before you have a urine test, your healthcare provider will look at other more common causes of health changes, like:

- Not drinking enough fluid (being dehydrated).
- Not getting enough sleep.
- Side effects from medicines.
- High or low blood sugar.
- Depression.
- Other infections.

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