

Treating a urinary tract infection (UTI) in children

Children's Emergency Department

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Information for Patients, Parents & Carers

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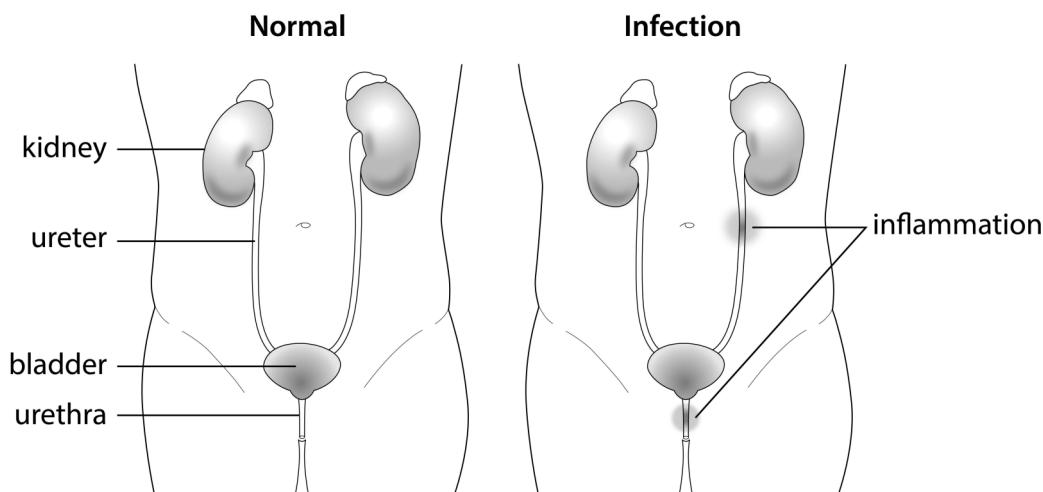
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What is a urinary tract infection (UTI)?

The urinary tract is the body's drainage system for producing and removing urine. It includes the kidneys, the tubes from the kidneys to the bladder (ureters), the bladder, and the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body (urethra).

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is a bacterial infection of the urinary tract. It is fairly common in children, but not usually serious and can be treated effectively. A UTI may be classed as either:

- an upper UTI – if it's a kidney infection or an infection of the ureters.
- a lower UTI – if it's a bladder infection (cystitis) or an infection of the urethra.



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What are the symptoms of a UTI in children?

There can be many different symptoms, depending on the age of the child. It can be difficult to tell whether your child has a UTI, as the symptoms can vary and young children can't easily communicate how they feel. Symptoms can include:

- a high temperature (fever).
- being more tired than usual.
- being sick (vomiting).
- not eating or drinking like they normally would.
- pain in their tummy, side or lower back.
- pain when they pee.

Sometimes your child may not display any of these symptoms.

How is a UTI diagnosed?

A urine sample is taken and tested in the department. If it suggests there is a UTI, it's sent to a laboratory for more specific testing on a machine which gives more accurate information. This can take up to 3 days, so we often start antibiotics when a UTI is likely, so your child doesn't become more ill while we are waiting for the result.

How is it treated?

As a UTI is a bacterial infection it can be treated with antibiotics. These are usually given by mouth and you will be able to go home. In more severe cases, or very young babies, your child may need to be admitted to hospital for antibiotics to be given directly into a vein.

Most children will get better with a 3 to 5 day course of antibiotics by mouth. Children will usually feel better in 1 to 2 days after treatment, but if your child is not better in 3 days, you should seek further medical help. It is very important that your child takes the full course of antibiotics, otherwise the infection may quickly return.

Symptoms caused by the infection, such as tummy pain and a high temperature, can be treated with paracetamol or ibuprofen for a few days. Drinking plenty of fluids will also help your child's body get rid of the infection.

What happens next?

When we get the final result of your child's urine test, we will contact you if you need to do anything else. Please make sure that we have your correct contact details so we can do this.

Some children may need follow-up tests and/ or appointments, especially if they are very young, or were very sick. We will send you and your GP a letter if this needs to happen.

What causes UTI in children?

UTIs are usually caused by bacteria from poo entering the urinary tract. The bacteria enter through the tube that carries pee out of the body (urethra). This can happen when a child wipes their bottom and soiled toilet paper comes into contact with their genitals. This is more of a problem for girls because their bottoms are much nearer their urethra. In babies it can happen when they get small particles of poo in their urethra when they soil their nappies.

Some children may be more vulnerable to UTIs because of other problems with emptying their bladder.

How can I prevent my child from getting a UTI again?

There are some things you can do to reduce the risk of UTIs happening again. You should:

- encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids so that they regularly pee during the day, and give them a balanced diet to avoid constipation.
- make sure your child goes to the toilet regularly. Not going regularly and "holding in" pee can make it easier for bacteria to infect the urinary tract. If access to toilets at school is difficult, you may need to discuss this with your child and teacher.
- teach girls to wipe their bottom from front to back; this helps to minimise the chances of bacteria entering the urethra.
- keep the genital area clean and dry. Change nappies as soon as possible once soiled.
- avoid nylon and other types of synthetic underwear as these can help promote the growth of bacteria; loose fitting cotton underwear is best.
- avoid using scented soaps or bubble baths as these can increase your child's risk of developing a UTI.

Contact details

If you have any concerns you can contact the NHS helpline on 111 for advice.

Giving us your feedback

We would love to get some feedback on your visit today. Use your smart phone to scan this QR code for quick access to our online feedback survey form.

Alternatively, you can access the feedback form from our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/thinking-of-choosing-us/patient-experience/>



If you have any questions, write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your nurse/ doctor:

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