

Patient information from BMJ

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Urinary tract infections in men

Urinary tract infections can affect the bladder, the kidneys, and the tubes that carry urine out of the body. They can cause symptoms including pain and fever and can cause serious problems if left untreated.

But treatment is usually very simple, using antibiotics. If you think you have symptoms of a urinary tract infection, you can use our information to talk with your doctor about the best treatments for you.

What are urinary tract infections in men?

In men, the urinary tract includes all the parts of the body involved in removing urine from your body.

- It starts at the **kidneys**, which filter some waste products in your body, which are then flushed out in your urine.
- The urine travels from your kidneys to your **bladder**, through two tubes called **ureters**.
- When you urinate the urine passes out of your body through a tube called the **urethra**, which extends from your bladder and through your **penis**.

What causes urinary tract infections in men?

Urinary tract infections, or **UTIs**, happen when bacteria in the urinary tract are not properly flushed out in your urine.

This can happen if there is a problem or an obstacle in any part of the urinary tract, or if the bladder doesn't empty completely. One very common cause is **prostate problems**.

The **prostate gland**, which sits just below your bladder, can become enlarged in middle-aged and older men. This can put pressure on parts of the urinary tract and prevent the bladder from emptying properly.

Any bacteria left behind in the bladder can then breed and cause symptoms of an infection.

You might hear prostate problems called by various names, including **enlarged prostate**, **benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)**, and **lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS)**.

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These prostate problems are **not** the same as prostate cancer. But if you notice any changes in the way you urinate, such as needing to urinate more often, it's a good idea to see your doctor.

Other things that can cause UTIs in men include:

- **Kidney stones**
- Having a **catheter** fitted to help urine drain away, because of another medical problem. For example, many men need a catheter to help them pass urine for a while after they have surgery
- **Diabetes**
- Previous surgery on the urinary tract, and
- Problems that can make some urine flow backward along the urinary tract.

UTIs are more common in older men than in younger men, often because of prostate problems.

But younger men can still get UTIs, often from **sexual activity**. Men who have anal sex seem to be especially at risk of UTIs.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a UTI can vary depending on how severe the infection is, and which parts of the urinary tract it affects. They can include:

- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Needing to urinate more than usual
- Pain when urinating
- Blood in the urine
- Discharge in the urine, and
- Fever.

If you see your doctor with symptoms of a UTI, they might want to do a physical exam, and probably some tests. These might include a urine test, and possibly a scan, such as an ultrasound.

What treatments are available?

UTIs are caused by bacteria. So the main treatment for a UTI is **antibiotics**, which kill the bacteria.

Most men take antibiotics for a UTI as pills. But people who are severely ill might need to be admitted to the hospital and given antibiotics directly into a vein as an intravenous (IV) drip.

If you need to take antibiotic pills, it will usually be for 1 or 2 weeks, depending on your symptoms.

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Most men are cured with one course of antibiotics. But if your symptoms don't improve after a few days, tell your doctor. You might need different antibiotics or more tests.

What to expect in the future

It's important to get treatment for a UTI, as they can have serious complications if left untreated, such as prostate and kidney infections.

Some men find that they have repeated infections as they get older. This is often the result of an enlarged prostate.

Having a catheter in place for a long time can also lead to repeated infections. You can talk with your doctor about what you can do to help prevent this happening.

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