



## URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

### A leaflet for relatives

Dear relative,

Your family member's well-being is a top priority at our nursing home. Since we know that urinary tract infections are common among nursing home residents, we want to provide you with information on recognizing symptoms, treatment, and how you can help prevent a urinary tract infection in your family member.

#### WHAT IS A URINARY TRACT INFECTION?

A urinary tract infection occurs when bacteria enter the urinary tract and cause symptoms. Urinary tract infections can be challenging to diagnose in nursing home residents.

#### WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS OF A URINARY TRACT INFECTION?



Frequent urination  
or urge



Burning sensation or  
pain when urinating



Suprapubic  
pain

Confusion, drowsiness, slurred speech, fever, or changes in urine smell or color can also occur, but they are not specific symptoms of a urinary tract infection. If your family member has these symptoms without any of the specific symptoms, it could be due to other factors like dehydration or medication, rather than a urinary tract infection



Co-funded by the European Union, eu4health programme, project id 101079838. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HDEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## DIAGNOSING URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

Diagnosing a urinary tract infection requires that the resident meets both of two criteria: Bacteria in the urine **and** specific symptoms of a urinary tract infection.

Having bacteria in the urine does not in itself mean that the resident has a urinary tract infection.

Around half of the nursing home residents have bacteria in the urine, and as long as it is not accompanied by any specific symptoms of a urinary tract infection, it is a harmless condition that should not be treated with antibiotics.

Urinary dipsticks are often used to diagnose urinary tract infections. However, in older adults, a positive dipstick result for leukocytes or nitrites is common even without an infection, making their use in nursing homes unreliable.

If you suspect a urinary tract infection in your family member, please discuss it with the staff. The staff can consult a doctor that can diagnose and treat your relative if necessary.



## GOOD TO KNOW ABOUT ANTIBIOTICS FOR URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

If your family member is diagnosed with a urinary tract infection, they will be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics have both advantages and disadvantages.



Antibiotics cure urinary tract infections and are lifesaving by preventing serious complications such as pyelonephritis and septicemia.



Antibiotics can have side effects. They affect the normal bacterial flora in the body and kill bacteria - not only those that make us sick, but also many of those that keep us healthy and are a normal and important part of our body. This can lead to rashes, diarrhea and vomiting, fungal infections, and allergic reactions.



Taking antibiotics increases the risk of acquiring a new infection with bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics. The more frequently antibiotics are used, the greater the risk of developing resistance. Antibiotic resistance is a threat to the treatment of future infections for the individual, and globally, it is considered to be a major risk to public health.

Therefore, it is important to use antibiotics wisely and only when necessary



Nursing home staff and doctors are aware of the disadvantages, and this is why you may observe that they are sometimes reluctant to prescribe antibiotics. Often, the nursing home staff wants to observe the resident for some time and may, for example, encourage your relative to a higher intake of fluids, to see if this resolves the symptoms, before contacting a doctor

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A RELATIVE TO HELP YOUR FAMILY MEMBER?



Talk with the nursing home staff if you observe anything that worries you.



Practice good hand hygiene when visiting the nursing home and help your family member to do the same – this is an important step in preventing both urinary tract infections and other infections.



Encourage your family member to increase fluid intake. In many cases, changes in behavior or urine are due to simple dehydration.



Assist your family member to use the toilet, if relevant. Frequent toilet visits and complete bladder emptying help prevent urinary tract infections.



If you are responsible for providing your family member with washcloths, towels, and other equipment for use in personal hygiene, make sure that your family member has enough, so that a clean one can be used each time.

# IMAGINE

We **IMAGINE** a future where antibiotics work for everyone, also in nursing homes

<https://imagineproject.eu/>



Co-funded by the European Union, eu4health programme, project id 101079838. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HDEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.