

FAST FACTS: Pain due to Urinary Tract Infection

Pain due to infection in the urinary tract can be from the passage of urine and/or felt over the bladder or flank area (upper abdomen or back and sides) when bacteria enter the urine via the urethra, the bladder or the kidneys. A **urinary tract infection (UTI)** can vary from a simple infection to a potentially life-threatening one. UTI is the second most frequent infection in long-term care settings and can be challenging to identify and treat because some UTIs show no symptoms (limited bacteria in urine). Medical treatment of a UTI with limited bacteria in the urine is not recommended because it increases the rate of adverse drug effects from antibiotics and increases the rate of recurrent infections due to multiple drug resistant bacteria.

✓ Normal Changes of Aging/Risks of UTI

- Resistance to UTIs is lower or worse with co-existing conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, or autoimmune disorders. Estrogen deficiency thins vaginal tissue causing more vulnerability to bacteria
- An enlarged Prostate in older males can cause urinary retention which predisposes men to chronic infection due to entrapped bacteria
- Incontinence and functional decline can further weaken ability to fight infection
- The use of indwelling urinary catheters, which may increase with age, increases the risk of UTIs, hospitalizations, and antibiotic resistance

✓ Assessment

- Assessment should include vital signs and review of mental status and level of pain
- Presence of back pain with tenderness (one side) could indicate kidney infection
- Review history of UTIs or catheterizations, kidney stones, or recent dehydration
- Mental status change is a MAJOR and common symptom of infection
- Healthcare provider will obtain a urine sample

✓ Possible Intervention

- Prescription or over the counter (OTC) Medications, which depends on diagnosis
- Non-Drug Treatments include: maintaining a calm environment (i.e. calming music, etc.), adequate hydration, and providing support as needed to maintain safety (i.e. to avoid falls, etc.)

✓ **What Caregivers can do to help their loved one with UTI Pain**

- Contact healthcare provider for assessment of your loved one's condition
- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their provider
- Consider using a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the provider
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment to decrease minor pain

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