



# SEPSIS AND UTIs

Urinary tract infections, or UTIs, are common infections that more frequently affect people with short urethras, cisgender women and transgender women who have had vaginoplasty, surgery to create a vagina. Most often, UTIs can be managed effectively when they are identified and treated quickly. An untreated UTI may spread to the kidney, causing more pain and illness. It can also cause sepsis. Urinary tract infections are one of the most common causes of sepsis among older adults. The term urosepsis is often used to describe sepsis caused by a UTI.

Sometimes incorrectly called blood poisoning, sepsis is the body's life-threatening response to infection. It affects 1.7 million people in the United States each year.

Like strokes or heart attacks, sepsis is a medical emergency that requires rapid diagnosis and treatment. Worldwide, 1/3 of people who develop sepsis die. Many who survive are left with life-changing effects, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain and fatigue, organ dysfunction (don't work properly) and/or amputations.

## WHAT IS A UTI?

A UTI is an infection in the urinary tract. The tract starts at your kidneys and continues through the ureters, the urinary bladder, and the urethra.

UTIs are most commonly caused by bacteria, but they can also be caused by a fungus.

## HOW DO YOU GET A UTI?

Bacteria can enter your urethra after you use the toilet, through sexual activity, or because of unsanitary conditions.

In the case of a fungal infection, usually the fungus gets to the urinary tract through the blood stream. People who develop this type of infection are usually ill with a condition that has compromised their immune system, such as AIDS.

## COMMON SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms of a UTI include:

- Sudden and extreme urges to void (pass urine)
- Frequent urges to void
- Burning, irritation, or pain as you void
- A feeling of not emptying your bladder completely
- A feeling of pressure in your abdomen or lower back
- Thick or cloudy urine- it may contain blood
- Fever
- Pain in the lower flank, part of the back where your kidneys are located
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fatigue

Seniors may not show any of these signs or they may be too subtle to notice. An added symptom among this age group is confusion. Often, if a senior's behavior changes suddenly, they may have an undiagnosed UTI.

## TREATMENT

Antibiotics are used to treat UTIs caused by bacteria, and anti-fungals to treat infections caused by fungi. You also would be encouraged to drink a lot of water, to help flush out the infection.

It is essential that you complete your full prescription, taking all the medications you receive, even if you feel 100% again.

## PREVENTION

In many cases, we can prevent UTIs by:

- Wiping from front to back after a bowel movement reduces the chances of stool reaching the entrance of the urethra of cisgender and transgender women.
- Cleaning the genital area after sexual intercourse.
- Ensuring a sterile or clean environment when inserting urinary catheters and keeping the urethral clean while the catheter is in place. Urinary catheters should not stay in place for longer than necessary.

## WHAT IS SEPSIS?

Sepsis is the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

### What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Sepsis is a toxic response to an infection. There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. It is, rather, a combination of symptoms.

Symptoms can include ANY of the following:

<b>T</b>	<b>Temperature:</b> Higher or lower than normal
<b>I</b>	<b>Infection:</b> May have signs and symptoms of an infection
<b>M</b>	<b>Mental Decline:</b> Confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse
<b>E</b>	<b>Extremely Ill:</b> Severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath

**SEPSIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. IF YOU SUSPECT SEPSIS, CALL 9-1-1 OR GO TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY.**

**To learn more about sepsis, or to read tributes and survivor stories, visit us online at [Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org)**



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