

## Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Use this checklist to help identify signs and symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) or other illnesses.

- ✓ **If the person you support has one or more of these signs and symptoms, call the doctor for advice and a medical appointment.** Share information you gathered using this checklist with the doctor. Write down what you see and hear.
- ✓ Share information about signs and symptoms with the people you support. You can use the narrated slide show on the Safety.Net website ([www.ddssafety.net](http://www.ddssafety.net)) titled **Consumer Tool – Knowing What to Look for: Urinary Tract Infections**.
- ✓ **Be particularly watchful of people you support who are most likely to get a UTI.** Women are at the highest risk for a UTI. For men and women the risk of a UTI is highest after age 50. Medical conditions such as diabetes or kidney problems put people at higher risk. Individuals who do not walk, use a wheelchair, do not complete personal care/toileting independently, have bowel incontinence or constipation, or use a urinary catheter (a tube to drain the bladder) are at higher risk for a UTI. People you support who take antipsychotic medication or have seizure activity may also be at increased risk. Frequent or recent sexual activity is a risk factor for young women.
- ✓ **ALERT! Once a person has had a UTI, they are at increased risk of having a second UTI.**

### What are the signs and symptoms of a UTI?

- ✓ A burning feeling when going to the bathroom (urinating)
- ✓ Feeling like you have to pee even when you just finished urinating
- ✓ Sleeping a lot, very tired, no energy
- ✓ Pain in the lower stomach or genital area
- ✓ Cloudy, dark, bloody, or foul-smelling urine (pee)
- ✓ Pain in the back or side below the ribs
- ✓ Fever or chills
- ✓ Nausea and vomiting

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**To help decide if you need to call the doctor, please read about these signs and symptoms and then use the Checklist Summary Sheet on the last page to record your answers. This is the checklist that you should use when talking to the doctor.**

### **Does this person have a burning feeling when going to the bathroom (urinating)?**

- This is one of the most common symptoms of a UTI. The person may tell you that it is painful to pee. Are they feeling a burning sensation in the urethral area (where you they pee)? When did the burning feeling start? How bad is it? Not too bad? Really bad?
- You may notice a change in behavior. The person may scratch or rub their lower stomach or genital area. The person may be fidgety and anxious.
- Having a burning sensation when peeing can be very frightening and cause a person to be aggressive or show their pain and frustration in any number of ways.
- Knowing the individual, their daily routines, and how they communicate is critical to recognizing signs and symptoms of a UTI.



### **Does the person feel like they have to pee even when they just finished urinating?**

- Does the person feel the need to pee more often than usual? If you notice that the person is going to the bathroom more frequently than usual, ask them why. Do they feel discomfort or pain? Are they sometimes not able to pee? When did the feeling start?
- The person may be able to tell you, and, if not, look for changes in their daily routine or behavior that indicate they are having a frequent need to pee.



### **Does the person have pain in the lower stomach or genital area?**

- If the person tells you they have pain in the lower stomach or genital area, ask when the pain started. Can they describe the pain? How bad is it? Not too bad? Really bad? Is it a sharp pain or a dull ache?
- If the person is unable to tell you, look for a change in behavior. The person may hold or rub their lower stomach area or genital area or may rock back and forth with their hands on their stomach.
- While pain in the lower stomach or genital is one of the most common symptoms, a man may have pain in the anal area.
- Know the individual, their daily routines, and how they communicate that they are having pain or not feeling well.



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### Does the person sleep a lot, seem very tired, or less active than usual with no energy?

- Tiredness and the need to sleep a lot, especially during the day, are general, non-specific signs of illness. However, these symptoms can be a sign, in fact the only sign, of a UTI. In a review of regional center special incident reports of hospitalization for internal infections, one in three individuals hospitalized were diagnosed with a UTI. Many times the doctor was called or the person was taken to the emergency room because supporters observed that the individual was unusually tired, did not participate in regular daily activities, and wanted to sleep during the day.
- For some individuals unusual tiredness is the only sign that the person is ill.



### Does the person have cloudy, dark, bloody, or foul smelling pee (urine)?

- Have you or the individual you support noticed any change in the color or smell of their pee? Normal pee is clear and pale yellow. The color and smell of pee can be affected by what you eat, for example, asparagus can give pee a bad smell or eating lots of beets can make pee red. But these are temporary changes that have an explanation.
- When there is no obvious reason for a change in the color and smell of a person's pee, it is a warning sign that something is wrong.
- A urine test is the most common diagnostic test for a UTI. The doctor will ask for a urine sample and have it tested to determine if bacteria (germs) that cause infection are in the urine.



### Does the person have a fever or chills?

- Ask the individual if they feel hot or are having chills. Do they have a fever? How long has the person had a fever? What is their temperature? Do they have chills? Are they shivering and shaking?
- The person may have a UTI and not have a fever. A fever may be a sign that the infection is worsening and that the kidneys are infected.
- If the person has any other signs or symptoms, take their temperature to be sure. A fever of 101 degrees or higher must be reported as soon as possible to the person's doctor for advice and a medical appointment.



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### Does the person have pain in the lower back or side below the ribs?

- The person may tell you that they have pain in their lower back or side. When did the pain start? How bad is it? Not too bad? Really bad? Is it a sharp pain or a dull ache? Is the area sensitive to the touch?
- You may notice a change in behavior. The person may hold or rub their back. Knowing the individual's typical behavior and how they communicate is critical to recognition of signs and symptoms of a UTI.
- Pain in the lower back or side may be a sign that the person has a kidney infection. While an infection of the lower urinary tract, the urethra or bladder, is usually quickly treated with antibiotics, a kidney infection is more serious and if not properly diagnosed and treated can lead to permanent kidney damage.



### Does the person have nausea or are they vomiting?

- Ask the person if they are feeling sick to their stomach. Find out how long they have felt this way. You may see the person throwing up. Is this the first time or have they been sick for a longer period of time?
- This may be a sign that the person has a kidney infection.



### If the doctor diagnoses a UTI, follow the doctor's instructions for treatment. Make sure the person you support

- ✓ takes antibiotics as directed
- ✓ gets plenty of rest
- ✓ drinks lots of water and other fluids (eight or more 8 ounce glasses a day)
- ✓ urinates often

The earlier a UTI is diagnosed and treated, the faster the person will get better.

# Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

## Checklist Summary Sheet - Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of a Possible UTI

**Print and use** this checklist to record information about signs and symptoms of a possible Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) or other illnesses.

**Name of Person You Support:** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Does this person have a burning feeling when going to the bathroom (urinating)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person feel like they have to pee even when they just finished urinating?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person have pain in the lower stomach or genital area?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person sleep a lot, seem very tired, and have no energy?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person have cloudy, dark, bloody, or foul smelling urine (pee)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person have a fever or chills?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person have pain in the back or side below the ribs?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>Does the person have nausea or are they vomiting?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What do you see or hear?</p>
<p><b>If the person has one or more of these symptoms, call the doctor for advice and to schedule an appointment. Take this checklist with you and share it with the doctor.</b></p>