

Understanding *Urinary Tract Infections*

A basic guide to keeping your bladder healthy



About this booklet

Since our founding in 1957, we have worked closely together with healthcare professionals and users to create products and solutions that are sensitive to their needs. This journey has given us a deep understanding of continence issues and we know that urinary tract infections (UTIs) are particularly concerning for catheter users. There are two types of catheters and the information in this booklet is focused on using an indwelling catheter. However, both indwelling and intermittent catheters both have an increased risk of UTI.

In this booklet, we will answer some of the most common questions around UTIs. We have also gathered some facts and helpful advice that can help you keep your bladder healthy in order to minimise the risk of UTIs.



All icons are for illustration purpose only

Concerned about UTIs?

You're not alone

The precise cause of UTIs is unclear, and while there are several practical steps you can take to reduce your risk of having one, you should always consult a healthcare professional if you get one, or if you have questions.

On the following pages you will find some good advice, grouped into three areas to give you a simple overview:

- Hygiene
- Hydration
- Urine drainage bag options

UTIs are a common issue for many catheter users. If you have worries, or feel uncertain about how to reduce your risk of UTIs, you're not alone. Indeed, with many catheter users experiencing two or more UTIs every year, they represent a significant source of concern.



What is a UTI?

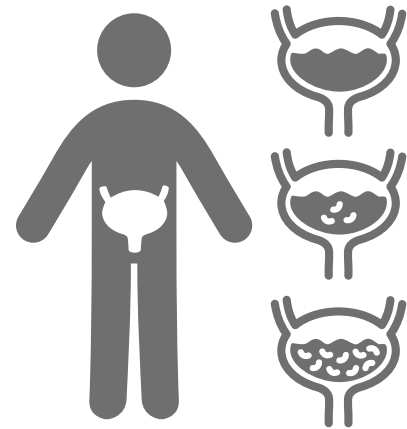
A **UTI** is only diagnosed when there are bacteria in the urine **and** the user is experiencing one or more of the symptoms mentioned on the next page.

In most people, urine is virtually sterile (containing little or no germs or bacteria), and the presence of bacteria in the urinary tract does not necessarily cause a UTI. If, however, the bacteria grow and multiply to a certain level, they may cause an infection of the urinary tract and may need to be treated.

Anybody can get a UTI though there is a higher risk if you are a catheter user due to bacteria entering the bladder from the catheter, or around it. Women also tend to get more UTIs due to their comparatively shorter urethra (the channel through which urine is passed) which gives easier access for bacteria to enter into the bladder.



It is important that you seek and follow the advice of your healthcare provider in the diagnosis and treatment of a UTI.



How can I tell if I have a UTI?

If **you have** any of the signs and symptoms¹ detailed below, it indicates the possibility of an infection. However you might not feel pain and bladder irritation if the nerves to your bladder are affected. Remember, a UTI will only be diagnosed when there is **also** bacteria in the urine. You should always consult your healthcare provider to confirm the diagnosis and get the appropriate treatment.



Fever/sweating



Flank pain (area below the ribs and above the pelvis)



Pain when passing urine



Shivering and increased muscle spasms in the body and bladder



Cloudy/bloody urine



Dark-coloured and strong-smelling urine

¹ Grabe et al. 2015, EAU Guidelines on Urological Infections.

Maintain good personal hygiene

UTIs [may result](#) when bacteria – perhaps left behind after improper hand washing, or present near the urethral opening – are introduced into the urinary tract.

That's why it's important to wash your hands with soap and water before handling any part of your catheter or drainage system.

Wash the catheter using downward strokes away from the body and then wash the area where the catheter enters the body with soap and water only. This should be done every day both morning and night and if possible after opening your bowels.

Also, be careful how you clean yourself or after a bowel movement. Wipe from front to back so that bacteria from your anal area are not pushed into the urethral opening or urethra.

(View the World Health Organisation hand hygiene technique at the back of this book)



Hygiene

Establishing a routine that's healthy and convenient

Create a routine that works for you

Choose convenient times to empty your bag, such as coffee breaks and around meal times, so it becomes less disruptive and part of your daily rhythm. This does not have to be the exact same time every day.

Stay properly hydrated

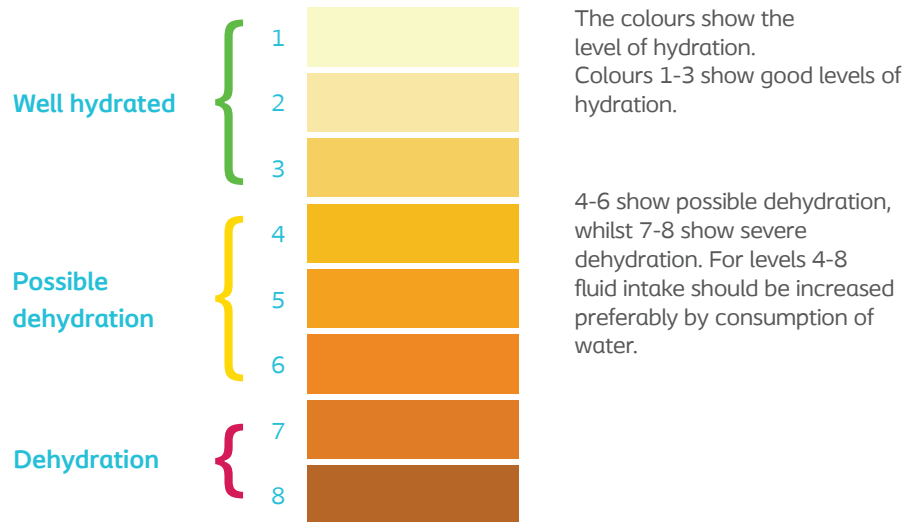
Make sure you drink at least 1.5 - 2 litres of liquid a day (unless you have been advised otherwise), as this reduces the risk of UTIs. Check the urine colour chart overleaf for further guidance.



Routine and compliance

Am I hydrated?

Urine colour chart²



² 'Am I Hydrated Colour chart' adapted by A Yates / Coloplast 2017

What do other colours of urine mean?

- **Bright yellow / discoloured urine** can be the result of taking some vitamin supplements.
 - **Dark orange / amber / brown urine** is usually a sign of dehydration but can be an indication of jaundice. Increase fluids but if it continues to persist consult your doctor.
 - **Pink to reddish urine** could be the result of recently eating certain foods especially beetroot, blueberries or rhubarb, BUT it could also be a sign of blood in the urine which requires medical advice.
 - **Some medications** can discolour the urine. You can check this out with a pharmacist or doctor.
 - **Green urine** can be caused by eating asparagus.
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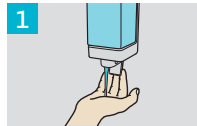
Hand hygiene - How to wash hands

Good hand hygiene is essential to limit the risk of getting a UTI when using an indwelling catheter.

The WHO hand hygiene technique with soap and water



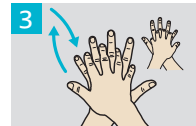
Wet hands with water.



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



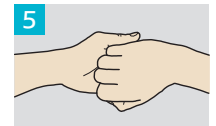
Rub hands palm to palm.



Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa.



Palm to palm with fingers interlaced.



Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.



Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa.



Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



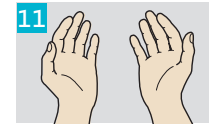
Rinse hands with water.



Dry your hands thoroughly with a clean or single use towel.



Use towel to turn off faucet.



Your hands are now clean.

Leg bags

There are many types of leg bags and choosing the right one to suit your lifestyle is important.

Your healthcare professional will show you examples and give you advice on their use.

Everyone leads different and varying lifestyles, so regardless of whether you're working, going out for dinner, or taking a long train journey, there is a selection of leg bags which you can choose from. To ensure you choose the most suitable product for your lifestyle there are different capacities and tube lengths to suit your daily needs.

All the urine drainage bags in this booklet are available on prescription. For a free sample, call the Coloplast Customer Care Helpline on Freephone 0800 132 787 or Freephone 0800 581 220 in the Republic of Ireland.



Questions about leg bags

Q: How often should I change my leg bag?

A leg bag should be changed every 5–7 days. However, it's recommended that if the leg bag becomes disconnected from the catheter you should use a new bag. If your leg bag is damaged or visibly dirty then you can change it sooner.

Q: How often should I empty my leg bag?

Always wash your hands before and after you empty your leg bag. You should empty your leg bag directly into the toilet or receptacle when it's approximately half full, or sooner if it's uncomfortable on your leg. To avoid the risk of infection or bacteria entering the leg bag, do not let the tap touch the seat or bowl of the toilet.

Q: What should I do if my leg bag is not filling with urine?

If you notice that the urine bag is not filling as it normally would then you may have a kink in the leg bag tubing. Check to see whether the tubing has kinked and if so straighten the tubing. If it's not the tubing, then you should consult your healthcare professional.

There are a variety of products available to help minimise the risk of any tubing kinking; such as the Simpla G-Strap to support catheter tubing and drainage bags with anti-kink tubing. The Simpla Profile and Simpla Plus leg bag ranges have specially designed anti-kink tubing.

Night bags

For a more peaceful night's sleep, your leg bag should be attached to a 2-litre capacity drainage bag to ensure free flow of urine throughout the night.

There are two types of 2-litre night bags available; drainable and non-drainable. Drainable bags can be reused for up to 5–7 nights, whereas non-drainable bags are used once and then disposed of. Many healthcare professionals recommend using disposable night bags.

The Simpla S2 non-drainable, 2-litre night bag has a welded tear strip at the top for safe, easy emptying and finger holes at the top and bottom for ease of pouring. It should be emptied in the morning before being thrown away.

The Simpla Profile range also includes a strong, 2-litre drainable night bag. It has a secure 'click-close' lever action tap and 120cm of anti-kink tubing.



Remember, your overall health is important too

The advice in this booklet is intended to answer some of the most common questions you have about UTIs, and to help minimise your risk of getting one. It is also important to remember the importance of staying in good overall health. By getting enough sleep, eating healthily and exercising regularly, you will strengthen your immune system and increase your chances of preventing UTIs.



You should always follow the specific instructions provided by your healthcare provider, and those included with your urine drainage solution. If you still suffer from frequent UTIs despite all these precautions, talk to your healthcare provider for more advice.



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