

Understanding Urinary Tract Infections

A basic guide to keeping
your bladder healthy

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About this booklet

Coloplast develops products and services that make life easier for people with very personal and private medical conditions. At Coloplast, we understand what you're going through because we've helped hundreds of thousands of people living with an intimate healthcare condition. Our goal is to help you find the right products and solutions to lead an active, rewarding life.

Since we were founded in 1957, we have worked closely 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) or water infections, are particularly concerning for catheter users.

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.



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**
- ▶ **Routine & compliance**
- ▶ **Catheter options**

A widespread issue. 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 catheter users told us¹



Users have
an average of

2-3

UTIs per year^{1,2,3}

81%
say

not having UTIs
would represent
good bladder health

45%

consider UTIs one
of the biggest
issues in their life

UTIs are a daily
concern for

41%

of all intermittent
catheter users



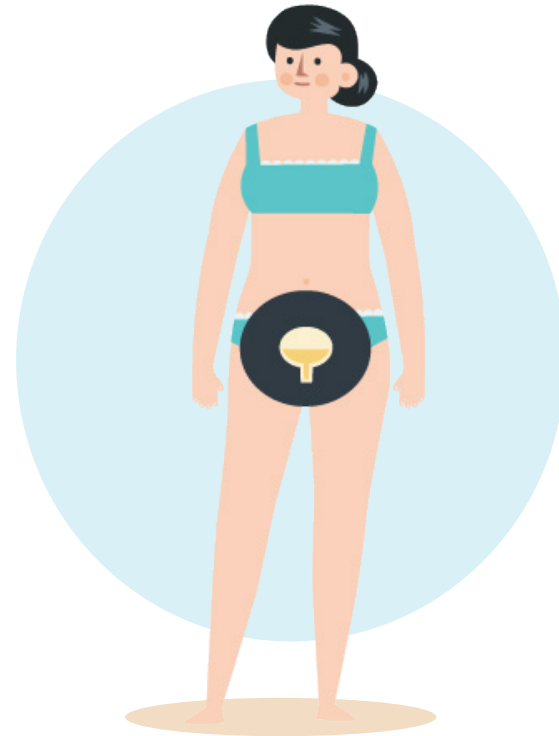
¹ Source: IC user survey (Countries: US, UK, DE, NL, FR, IT), January 2016 (n=2942), ² Kennelly et al. 2019, ³ Islamoska et al. 2022.

What is a UTI?

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

In most people, urine is sterile (free from 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. 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
professional 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 are also bacteria in the urine. You should always consult your healthcare professional to confirm the diagnosis and get the appropriate treatment:



Fever/sweating



Pain when urinating



Increased frequency of urination



Increased urge to urinate



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



Shivering and increased muscle spasms
in the body and bladder



Dark-coloured and strong-smelling urine



Cloudy/bloody urine

¹ Source: IC user survey (Countries: US, UK, DE, NL, FR, IT), January 2016 (n=2942)

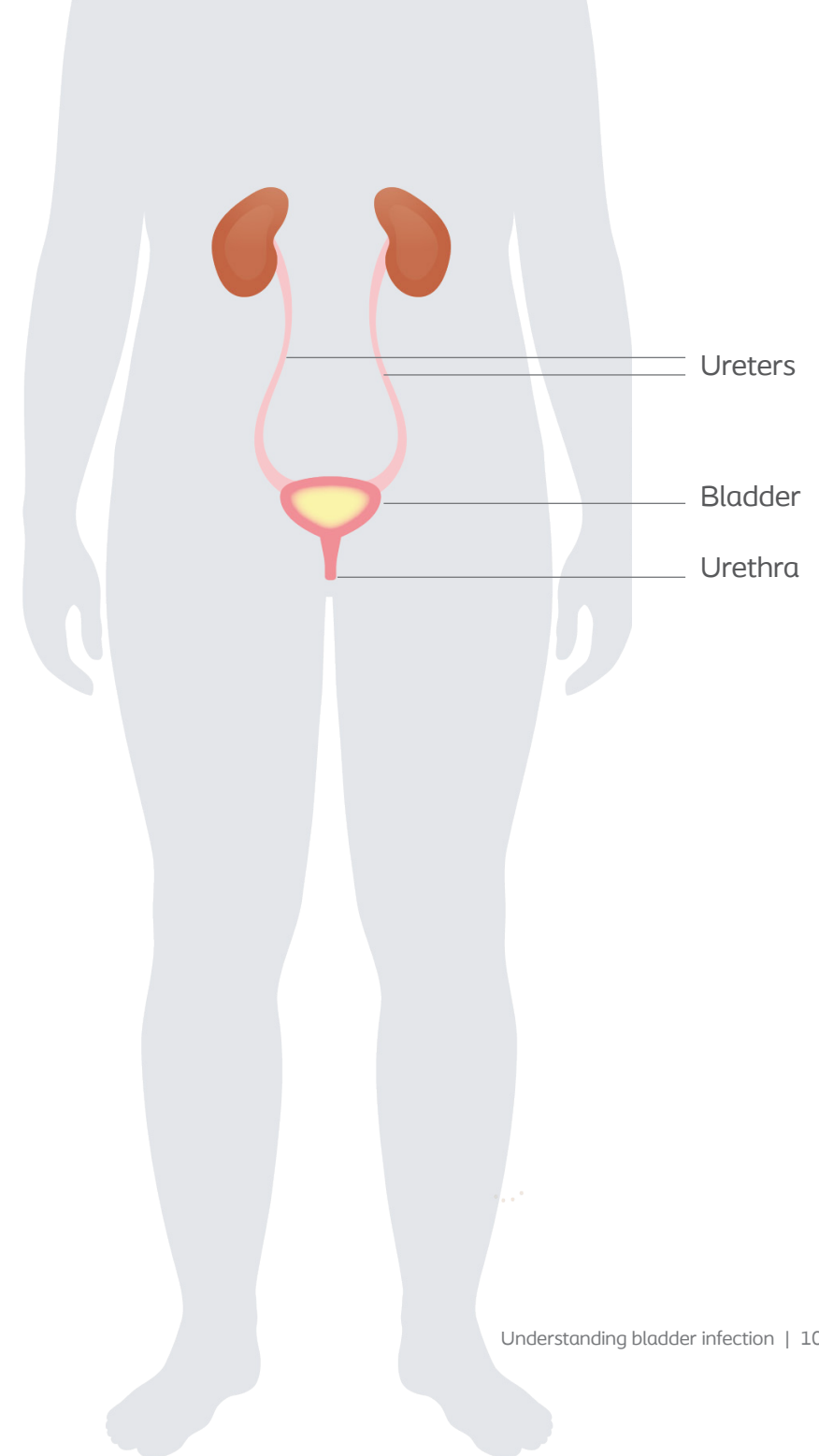


Eva

How does the bladder work?

Understanding how a healthy bladder functions is helpful as that is the process healthcare professionals try to reproduce with the use of catheters.

The bladder is situated in the lower urinary tract together with the urethral sphincters (closing muscles) and the urethra (the tube that leads urine from the bladder to the outside opening). The bladder stores urine until the urethra carries it out of the body.



When the bladder is working as it should, you will feel the urge to go to the toilet when your bladder is partly full and you can decide if it is the proper time to urinate. Passing urine is ideally a controlled and voluntary activity. The key to bladder health is emptying regularly and completely.

Bladder activity is regulated by your brain and the nervous system. The net of muscles in the bladder has stretch receptors, which respond when the bladder begins to fill with urine. All the stretch receptors are connected to nerves, which send signals up through the spine to the brain that it's soon time to urinate.

When you normally feel the urge to urinate, the first reaction is to squeeze the sphincter muscles. This lifts the pelvic floor in order to hold the urine inside the body until it's convenient to urinate. When it's a convenient time to urinate, the brain sends the message back that it's OK to release the urine.

You should ideally urinate 4-8 times a day, and to minimise the risk of UTI it's important to empty the bladder completely, as urine left in the bladder can cause urinary tract infections.

If you cannot empty your bladder naturally, it is important to empty using a catheter. If you use an intermittent catheter, you should catheterise as often as your healthcare professional recommends - which is typically 4-6 times per day.



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 when you catheterise.



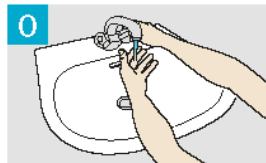
That's why it's important to wash your hands with soap and water before carefully cleaning around the urethral opening or urethra before inserting your intermittent catheter. Alternatively, disinfect your hands thoroughly before cleaning around the urethral opening or urethra.

Also, be careful how you clean yourself after urinating 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. It is a good idea to discuss optimal bowel emptying habits with your healthcare professional.

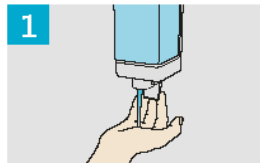


Good hand hygiene is essential in intermittent catheterisation to limit the risk of getting a UTI.

The WHO hand hygiene technique with soap and water



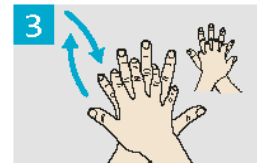
Wet hands with water.



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



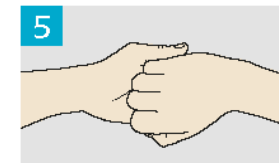
Rub hands palm to palm.



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



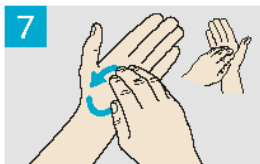
Palm to palm with fingers interlaced.



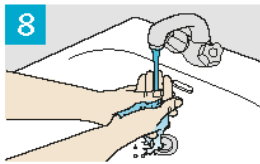
Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.



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



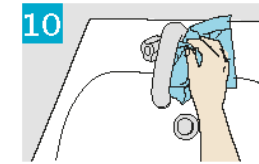
Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



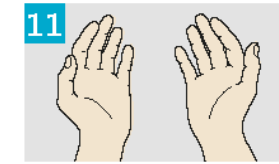
Rinse hands with water.



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



Use towel to turn off tap.



Your hands are now clean.

Regularly empty your bladder completely

Each time you catheterise, you remove urine in the bladder along with any bacteria that might be present in it. That's why it's important to create a regular flow through the bladder in order to "flush" it with fresh fluid during the day.



Getting into a good routine

with your catheterisation can help prevent UTIs. You should empty your bladder completely, as often as your healthcare professional recommends – which is typically 4-6 times per day.

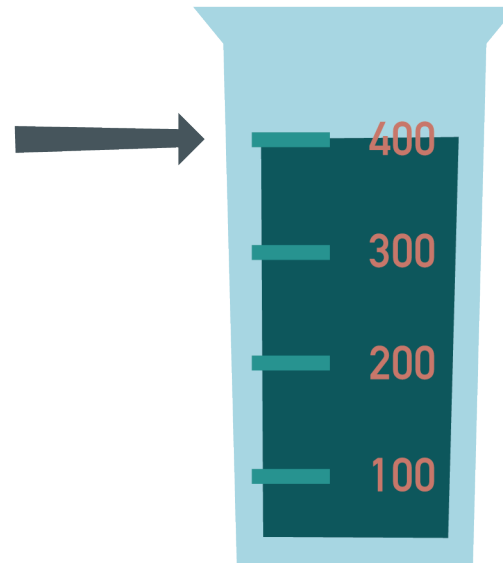


Check if you empty often enough

Every once in a while, measure the amount of urine you empty.

Your goal should be to empty between 250 ml and 400 ml as this helps you avoid overfilling your bladder and prevents leaking. If you empty more than 400 ml, or less than 150 ml, you should consult your healthcare professional.

When catheterising, if the urine stops flowing, slowly pull the catheter out about 1-2 cm. If urine starts flowing again, wait until it stops. When your bladder is empty, remove the catheter.

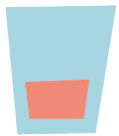


Establish a routine

Create a routine that's healthy, convenient and works for you.



Choose convenient times to catheterise, such as coffee breaks and around meal times, so it becomes less disruptive and part of your daily rhythm. It doesn't have to be the exact same time every day.





Stay properly hydrated

Every person needs daily fluids to maintain their health. The recommended daily amount for almost everybody is 6-8 glasses per day.

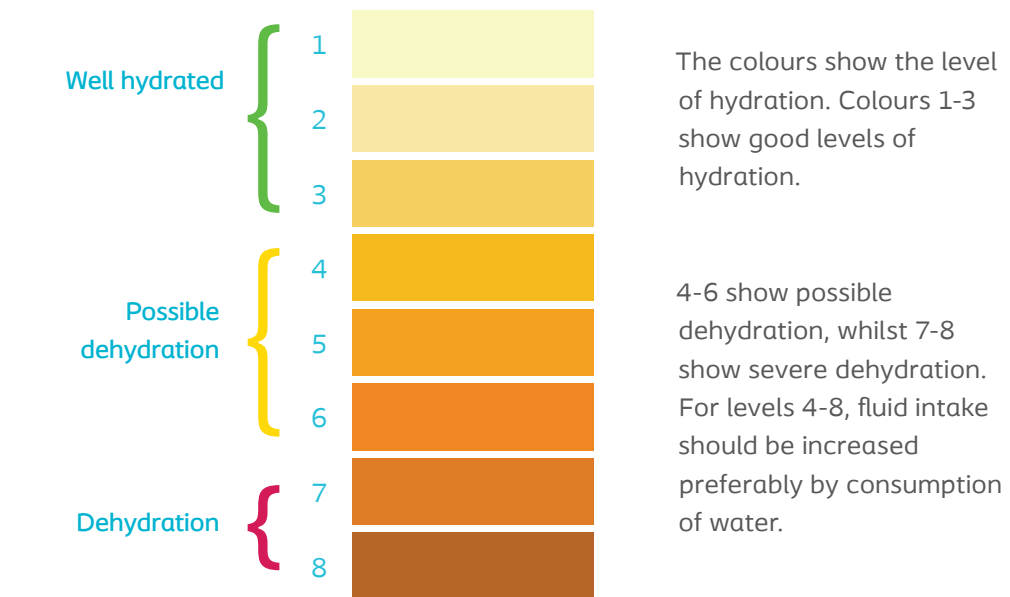


Drinking at least 1.5 - 2 litres of liquid a day (unless you have been advised otherwise), reduces the risk of UTIs. Check the urine colour chart on the next page for further guidance.

Water is the ideal choice. Beverages containing caffeine (cola, coffee, tea and some energy drinks) and artificial sweeteners are known bladder irritants and may need to be kept to a minimum.

Am I hydrated?

Urine colour chart



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.

Green urine can be caused by eating asparagus.

Some medications can discolour the urine. You can check this out with a pharmacist or doctor.





Out and about

It is important to maintain your routine when you are out and about. However, being in an environment you're not used to might make it difficult to stick to your usual routine. Being fully prepared for any eventuality can help you overcome that.

Consider pre-packing a kit so you have all the supplies you might need. The checklist on this page can help you prepare.

There are also catheters developed especially for use outside of the home such as catheters with sleeves or catheters with drainage bags.

Before you go - you may want to do some research before going to new places. It's a good idea to check the location of public toilets to know where you'll be able to catheterise. The **WheelMate app** helps you to find clean, accessible toilets and parking spaces when on the move, particularly helpful for wheelchair users. You can download the WheelMate app at coloplast.co.uk/wheelmate





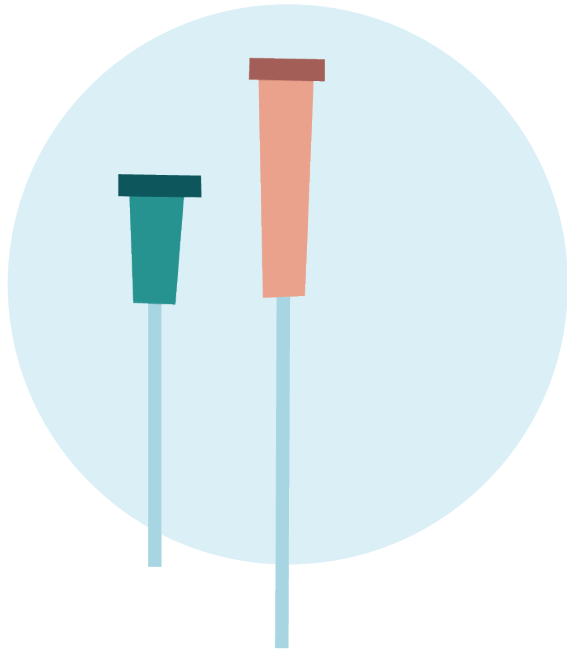
Checklist

- ☒ Catheters
(always bring extra)
- ☐ Extra underwear and
maybe extra pants
- ☐ Antibacterial gel or
handwash
- ☐ Paper towels or tissues
- ☐ Wet wipes
- ☐ Plastic bags
(for used accessories,
used catheters
or wet garments)
- ☐ Handheld mirror
(women)



Use a sterile catheter every time you catheterise

To prevent UTIs, we recommend you use a new, sterile well-lubricated catheter every time you catheterise.



A **coated catheter** (hydrophilic-coated or pre-lubricated) can help lessen friction as you insert and remove your catheter. It makes catheterisation more comfortable and convenient. Studies, data and findings also link them to lower rates of infection^{4,5} and less urethral damage^{4,6,7} compared with other catheters.

⁴ Cardenas et al. 2011, ⁵ De Ridder et al. 2005, ⁶ Stensballe et al. 2005, ⁷ Sutherland et al. 1996.

Choose a catheter that suits your lifestyle

Different lifestyles or everyday activities sometimes require different intermittent catheterisation solutions. Catheters come in many variants: standard length catheters, compact catheters that can fit into your purse or pocket, and catheter sets where a urine bag is attached to the catheter.



Finding the right catheter is a very personal choice and the best one for you might not be the first one that you try. Research shows that being satisfied with your catheter solution is very important for maintaining your schedule and thereby ensuring good bladder health^{8,9}. That's why it is important to find the catheter solution that suits you. You might need to try different catheters to find the one that fits you the best.

⁸ Barbosa et al. 2012, ⁹⁰ Wyndaele JJ Spinal Cord 2002

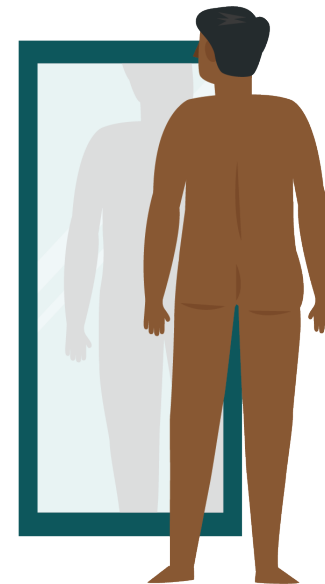
Remember, your overall health is important too

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 professional, and those included with your intermittent catheterisation solution. If you still suffer from frequent UTIs despite all these precautions, talk to your healthcare professional for more advice.



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