

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) Program Communication for Family Newsletter

You will be more successful with the UTI Program if your team provides information to residents and families. The information in this resource can be used in a newsletter for residents and families.

This resource is part of Public Health Ontario's [UTI Program](#). For more information, please visit www.publichealthontario.ca/UTI or email UTI@oahpp.ca.

Did you know that it is very common to find bacteria in the urine of the elderly?

Bacteria are found in the urine of up to half of women and a third of men living in long-term care homes.

Bacteria in the urine do not always mean that a resident has an infection. Finding bacteria in the urine in someone who does not have signs of infection is called asymptomatic bacteriuria. This condition does not need to be treated with antibiotics.

Giving someone antibiotics when they are not sick can be harmful. Antibiotics can produce side effects such as rashes, nausea, loose stools and allergic reactions.

As well, if an older adult is given antibiotics too often, they may develop an antibiotic-resistant strain of bacteria in future infections or illnesses, making those infections difficult to treat.

For these reasons, *[insert name of Nursing Home]* has started an initiative to send urine specimens to the laboratory only when the resident has specific signs of a urinary tract infection and to give antibiotics only to residents who need them.

What are signs of a possible urinary tract infection?

When a person has a urinary tract infection, they may say it hurts or burns when they pass urine. It may be hard for them to urinate, or they may feel the need to urinate more often. They may have a fever or, less commonly, blood in their urine. They may complain of pain in their side, lower stomach or lower back.

What are NOT signs of a urinary tract infection?

Disorientation and confusion are not reliable signs of a urinary tract infection. Bacteria in the urine are sometimes incorrectly blamed for causing changes in a resident's behaviour.

Smelly or cloudy urine does not mean a person has a urinary tract infection. Other medical problems, such as dehydration, may cause changes in the urine. Certain foods and medications may also cause changes in how urine looks or smells.

How will a possible urinary tract infection be managed with the new program?

When a resident has signs of a urinary tract infection, urine will be collected and sent to the laboratory for testing.

The doctor or nurse practitioner may wait for the results of the urine test before they decide about treatment, and they may encourage the resident to drink more water or clear fluids while they wait.

The resident will be closely monitored during this time.

A period of "watchful waiting" is an appropriate step to take and will not cause the resident any serious issues.

If a resident is found to have a urinary tract infection, then they will be given antibiotics.

How can you help?

Please let staff know if a loved one has any signs or symptoms of a urinary tract infection.

Antibiotics are not harmless. Please support our doctors or nurse practitioners in using antibiotics only for a true infection.

If you have more questions, please speak with your health care provider.

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