

# Urinary catheter infection

A urinary catheter is a small plastic tube that passes into your bladder.

A catheter takes urine from your bladder and drains it into a bag outside the body.

You can have a catheter put in for many reasons. They're often used when people cannot pee naturally. They can also be used to empty the bladder before or after surgery.

Having a catheter means there is a tube with one end inside your bladder and the other outside your body.

## How you get a urinary catheter infection

As long as the catheter is in place, there is a risk that bacteria will travel along the tube and into your bladder.

## Preventing a urinary catheter infection

It is OK to ask a doctor or nurse:

- if you really need a catheter - if you do not have a catheter, you're less at risk of getting an infection
- to clean their hands before they put in or touch your catheter or catheter bag
- to clean the area of your body before putting the catheter in
- if you still need a catheter - the longer it's in, the greater the risk of infection.

It's OK to ask people to clean their hands when they're caring for you.

## Diagnosing a urinary catheter infection

You might need to give a sample of your pee if your doctor thinks you have an infection. This will show if there are bacteria in your bladder.

You should get the results back within a few days.

If you've had a catheter for a long time, the test will likely be positive. A positive test does not always mean you have an infection and does not always mean you need treatment with antibiotics.

# Symptoms of a urinary catheter infection

Common symptoms of a urinary catheter infection include:

- discomfort low down in your tummy
- pain where the tube comes out
- pus or blood where the tube comes out

Symptoms of a more serious infection include:

- a high temperature
- chills
- nausea (feeling sick)
- weakness

Tell your nurse or doctor right away if you notice any of these symptoms.

## Causes of a urinary catheter infection

A catheter is more likely to cause an infection in people who are already very sick.

There are lots of people in hospital with infections or superbugs. It's easy for these bugs to spread in hospital.

If a catheter stays in for a few weeks, it's likely that bacteria will get into your bladder. If the bacteria spread to your kidneys or blood, they can make you sick.

## Treatment of a urinary catheter infection

If a urine test comes back positive but the bacteria are not making you unwell, it's usually safer not to take antibiotics.

If you get a kidney or blood infection from your catheter, you will need antibiotics to treat it.

Find out [more about antibiotics](#)

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