



## What you need to know about Urinary Tract Infections

If you have ever had a UTI you would agree that they are uncomfortable and painful. The same is true for our furry companions but they may not show immediate signs of being in discomfort. This article will hopefully give you a better understanding of the infection and what you need to do to help your pet.

### What is a UTI?

- Infection of the urinary system including the *kidneys, bladder, and/or urethra* due bacterial overgrowth (Quick fact: *E.coli* is the most cause bacteria of UTIs). Infection of the kidneys is referred to as nephritis (emergency, but rare) and if the bladder and urethra are involved it is referred to as cystitis.

### Signs and Symptoms:

- Frequent urination of small amounts
- Straining to urinate (commonly mistaken for straining to defecate)
- Blood tinged urine
- Urine has strong odor
- Accidents in the house
- Not feeling well/ lethargy
- Animal may not want to eat



### How to diagnose it:

- **Go to the vet** ASAP – this is very painful and it will not clear up on its own
- The vet staff will collect a urine sample for testing:
  - *Color, clarity, and odor*
  - Urine *chemistry strip* – this little strip tells us so much such as pH and chemical make-up (bilirubin, protein, ketones, glucose, etc)
  - *Specific gravity* – this tells us how well the kidneys are functioning
  - *Microscopic exam* – look for presence of bacteria, white blood cells, crystals, debris, red blood cells, etc
  - *Culture and susceptibility test*– this is recommended so that the vet can pick an antibiotic based on what the bacteria is most susceptible to
- Recurrent infections may occur and further testing or consultation with a specialist may be recommended to determine why general antibiotics are not clearing up the infection. Recurrent infections can be caused by:
  - *Arthritis* – it's harder for females to squat, so when they do their vulva touches the ground which introduces pathogens from the environment
  - *Poor conformation* – if the vulva is 'sunken' bacteria can get trapped in the opening and the infection can't be cleared until surgical fix is done to fix the issue
    - This requires a surgery to remove excess skin around the vulva
  - *Excess hair* – too much hair that is not kept clean around the genital area can trap dirt, pathogens, and moisture which increases the incidence of infection



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**Treatment:**

- **Antibiotics** are the primary treatment option for UTIs
  - Again the vet can more easily pick the correct antibiotic after a culture has been done
  - NOTE: make sure to finish the antibiotic regimen....bacteria resistance can occur if antibiotics are not used as prescribed.
- Depending on the results the vet may not only prescribe antibiotics but may also recommend **other** changes including **food** change, adding **supplements**, **bloodwork** and/or **surgery**.
  - Crystals: can lead to possible stone formation which often requires surgery to fix
    - pH that is too low or high can cause crystal formation. There are prescription diets available to decrease the pH if too high
    - Depending on the life stage of the animal and/or how that particular animal's metabolism works a change in food may be recommended
  - Glucose: glucose in the urine is an indicator for diabetes. Further blood tests should be done promptly
  - Surgery – to remove stones or to remove excess skin that could be trapping bacteria
- Short term **pain medication** regimen to aid in relieving discomfort

Once the antibiotics are done it is **VERY important** to have a **re-check urinalysis** done

- If a culture was not done unfortunately it is possible to pick an antibiotic that will not kill the desired bacteria.....Cultures CAN save you money in the long run
- Sometimes it takes just a little longer than the normal 1 to 2 weeks to clear up a bad UTI and the antibiotic regimen may need to be extended
  - It can take up to a month to clear up some infections

Please watch this great video that sums it up in under 5 minutes:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd8\\_LR-vMd4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd8_LR-vMd4)

