

Senior Living
Skilled/Rehab
In Home Care



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Urinary Tract Infections in the Elderly

Sometimes acute confusion can be the only symptom of a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) in the elderly. If a quick onset of confusion occurs, a urine specimen can help determine the cause. The elderly are particularly susceptible to UTI's due to the suppressed immune system that comes with age and certain age related conditions. Infections, especially UTI's, can mimic Alzheimer's disease or senior dementia. Younger people tend to empty the bladder completely upon urination, which helps to keep bacteria from accumulating within the bladder. But elderly men and women experience a weakening of the muscles of the bladder which leads to more urine being retained in the bladder, poor bladder emptying and incontinence.

Elderly people with serious urinary tract infection don't exhibit the hallmark sign of fever because their immune system is unable to mount a response to the infection due to the effects of aging. Between 30-40% of elderly patient with serious infection do not exhibit signs of fever.

Common causes:

- ✓ Diabetes
- ✓ Urinary retention
- ✓ Use of urinary catheter
- ✓ Bladder incontinence
- ✓ Bowel incontinence
- ✓ Enlarged prostate
- ✓ Immobility
- ✓ Surgery of any area around the bladder
- ✓ Kidney stones
- ✓ Hormonal factors such as estrogen deficiency in women
- ✓ Anatomical factors such as an enlarged prostate in men or a cystocele in women
- ✓ Living in a long-term care facility
- ✓ Functional factors such as Parkinson's disease or dementia

Symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection In an Elderly Person

1. Confusion or delirium-like state
2. Poor Motor skills or dizziness
3. Changes in Behavior
4. Hallucinations
5. Agitation
6. Falls

UTI's can cause serious health problems such as acute or chronic kidney infections, which could permanently damage the kidneys and even lead to kidney failure. UTI's are also the leading cause of sepsis, a potentially life-threatening infection of the bloodstream. Symptoms of sepsis include a rapid heartbeat and fast breathing.

Prevention of UTI's:

- Avoid fluids that irritate the bladder, such as alcohol and caffeine
- Drink cranberry juice or take cranberry supplement, *but only if you or your family does not have a history of kidney stones*
- Drink lots of water (2-4 quarts per day)
- Change adult diapers frequently
- Always wipe from front to back (for women)
- Wear cotton-cloth underwear & change daily

