

Our Approach to the Management of Suspected Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Our staff is committed to providing the best possible care for your loved ones. Part of that commitment includes using antibiotics only when they are necessary. Concern about a possible urinary tract infection (UTI) is the most common reason for starting antibiotics in nursing homes. However, UTIs are often over-diagnosed. Cloudy or smelly urine, behavioral changes like refusing to eat or being combative or having problems with balance or falls do not necessarily mean that a resident has a UTI. These changes can be due to other factors, such as medications, diet, or dehydration.

Why is it important to use antibiotics correctly?

Antibiotics can save lives when used **correctly**. However, common germs can turn into dangerous “super bugs” when antibiotics are used **incorrectly**. Super bugs are germs that can’t be treated with even the strongest antibiotics. Infections caused by these super bugs are more likely to require hospitalization.



What do we do when your loved one shows signs of a possible UTI?

Whenever there is a concern that your loved one may have a UTI, our staff will talk with that person to learn more about their symptoms. We will perform an in depth exam that includes checking vital signs (temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and breathing rate) and their urinary condition, and we will explore if there are other explanations for the symptoms.



How do we manage possible UTIs?

- If your loved one’s symptoms and vital signs suggest the **risk of a UTI is high** (examples: fever, frequent or painful urination, blood in urine), our staff will contact their health care provider. The provider may order a urine test or other tests to decide the appropriate treatment. This may take a few days, and during this time, we will monitor your loved one closely for any changes.
- If your loved one’s symptoms and vital signs suggest that the **risk of a UTI is low**, our staff will check their vital signs more often, encourage drinking more fluids, increase monitoring, and follow guidelines for when to contact their provider. This is called “active monitoring”.
 - If your loved one develops additional symptoms, these will be detected during active monitoring, and your loved one will receive appropriate treatment.
 - If your loved one’s symptoms improve during active monitoring, then they did not have a UTI, and we will have avoided unnecessary antibiotics.



Taking this approach will allow us to promote safe, appropriate use of antibiotics and reduce the spread of dangerous superbugs. Please let us know if you have any questions.