

E. Coli

E. Coli bacteria are a common cause of cystitis, an infection of the bladder that occurs when there is a spread of the bacteria from the gut to the urinary system. Women are more susceptible to urinary tract infection by E. Coli because of the close proximity of the urethra and the anus.

E. Coli infections can be serious so preventing infections is important. The bacteria are usually spread through faecal matter reaching the mouth, or on wiping excrement wiped to the vagina.

UTI are common in pregnancy, and left untreated can lead to complications.

Common symptoms of UTI

- Burning sensation during urination.
- Needing to urinate more frequently (although as a single symptom this is a common harmless effect if pregnancy).
- Sensation of needing to pass large volumes of water when only a small amount is expelled.
- Lower abdominal pain.
- Cloudy, dark or blood stained urine.
- Unpleasant offensive smell to urine.

Please contact your Community Midwife for more information.

Preventing a urine infection in pregnancy

Information for patients



This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please telephone 01270 612454.



General advice helping to prevent infection

Consistent good hygiene practice is essential to reduce and prevent infection and exposure to antibiotics.

- Always wipe from front to back whenever you go to the toilet. This prevents unwanted bacteria transferring from the anus to the vagina.
- Try to fully empty your bladder when using the toilet.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Empty your bladder as soon as possible after intercourse.
- Fresh underwear daily, loose cotton underwear preferably.
- Shower/bathe daily. Avoid excessive washing, or using harsh perfumed soaps which may strip away the natural protective barrier, leaving you more vulnerable to infection.

Bacteria can be present in the urine without any symptoms

Harmful bacteria may be present in your urine sample without any symptoms resulting in a urine infection. At the beginning of pregnancy we ask all women at the booking appointment to be checked for urine infection regardless of symptoms. We will continue to test your urine throughout pregnancy using a dipstick and laboratory testing when needed.

During pregnancy there are hormonal, metabolic and mechanical factors that provide conditions which are more favourable for microbial growth in urine and cause a greater incidence of bacterial urine infection sometimes without symptoms.

What is a midstream urine sample?

At the beginning of your pregnancy journey your Midwife will ask you to provide a midstream urine sample to check for urinary tract infection (UTI).

A midstream urine sample means you don't collect the first or last part of urine that comes out. This reduces the risk of the sample being contaminated with bacteria from:

- Your hands.
- The skin around the urethra, the tube that carries urine out of the body.

How to collect a midstream urine sample

- Wash your hands.
- Start to urinate and collect a sample of urine "midstream" in a clean container provided.
- Screw the lid of the container shut.
- Wash your hands thoroughly.

What urine samples are used for?

Your Midwife or Doctor may ask for a urine sample to help them diagnose or rule out certain pregnancy related conditions.

Urine tests during pregnancy are most commonly done to check for infections – such as a UTI.