

Talking to Residents and Families

WHEN DOES A RESIDENT HAVE AN URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI) ?

An abnormal appearing or smelly urine without symptoms of an UTI should not be treated with antibiotics.

My family member's urine is dark and smells bad. Do they have a UTI?



- Dark, cloudy, or foul-smelling urine alone is not suggestive of a UTI.
- The diagnosis of a UTI is dependent on symptoms such as pain or burning while urinating, frequent urination, and feeling the need to urinate despite having an empty bladder.
- Dehydration can cause abnormal appearing urine. Increasing hydration may be helpful while continuing to observe the resident.

Just to be sure, can you check my family member's urine?



- Many nursing home residents have bacteria with abnormal appearing or smelling urine, especially those with indwelling urinary catheters. This condition is called asymptomatic bacteriuria.
- Asymptomatic bacteriuria does not need to be treated with antibiotic because it is not an infection.
- Treatment of asymptomatic bacteriuria will NOT prevent UTIs in the future.

Last time this happened a doctor prescribed an antibiotic and my family member felt better.



- Residents may be given antibiotics even though they do not have symptoms of a UTI.
- Antibiotics do not help when there are no symptoms of a UTI and may cause unwanted side effects and allergic reactions.
- Residents who are given unnecessary antibiotics may develop a more difficult to treat infection in the future.
- Overuse of antibiotics can result in a change from the "good" to the "bad" bacteria in the gut.
- Sometimes feeling better after taking an antibiotic may be due to improved hydration, adjustment of medications, or other treatments.

I'm still worried about my family member. What can we do for them?



- Healthcare team can review medications and maintain hydration.
- Resident can be monitored closely to assess for changes in condition, such as symptoms of infection.
- Please notify the healthcare team for additional concerns.

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