

# Escherichia coli (E. coli) Urinary Tract

## Patient and Carer Information

Infection Prevention Control Team



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:  
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

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## What is E. coli?

E. coli is a common bacteria that lives in the intestinal tract of animals and humans. E. coli can be found in faeces and can survive in the environment. Although this bacterium lives normally in your intestines, E. coli have the ability to cause a variety of infections. These include:

- Gastrointestinal disease,
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Bacteraemia (blood stream infections).

There are many forms of E. coli but for the purposes of this leaflet we will be focusing on urinary tract E. coli.

## Can E. coli be transmitted?

Most people carry harmless strains of E. coli in their intestine – known as colonisation.

Person-to-person transmission can occur through the oral-faecal route.

E. coli can be transmitted to others via poor hand hygiene, contaminated equipment and environmental contamination.

Good personal hygiene, good hand hygiene with liquid soap and running water and an increase in fluids often help to prevent E.coli colonisation turning into an infection.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Generally feeling unwell
- Fever / rigors (e.g. high temperature, shivering)
- Altered mental state (e.g. confusion)
- Reduced mobility
- Headache
- Pelvic pain
- Loin pain
- Frequency in passing urine

- Burning sensation when passing urine
- Offensive smell or colour
- Haematuria (blood in the urine)

### **How is urinary tract E. coli diagnosed and treated?**

A urine sample is obtained and sent to the microbiology laboratory for testing. The results are normally known within 2 to 5 days.

People who are colonised with E. coli do not generally require any treatment.

Only if they show signs and symptoms of an infection will they be prescribed antibiotic treatment by a healthcare professional. It is important if commenced on antibiotics that they fully complete the antibiotic course prescribed.

### **How can recurring infections be prevented?**

Recurring infections can be prevented by:

- Drinking plenty of fluids to stay hydrated e.g. water, tea, coffee, fruit juice.
- Wiping yourself from front to back when cleaning/washing.
- Washing your hands after using the toilet with soap and water.
- Eating a well-balanced diet to prevent constipation.

## Hand washing

The correct method of washing your hands is shown below:



The poster is a vertical rectangular graphic with a blue background. It is divided into five horizontal sections, each representing a step in the handwashing process. Each section contains a white square icon on the left and large white text on the right. The top right corner of the poster features the NHS logo. At the bottom, there is a white rectangular area containing a slogan and a question.

Step	Icon Description	Text
1	Hands being wetted by water from a tap.	Wet
2	Soap being applied to the hands.	Soap
3	Hands being scrubbed with soapy water.	Wash
4	Hands being rinsed under running water.	Rinse
5	Hands being dried with a paper towel.	Dry

**Stop germs spreading.  
The power is in your hands.**

Have you washed your germs away? Wash your hands.

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## How to contact us

If you have any questions or would like further information about urinary tract E.coli please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff during your hospital stay or community visit. Alternatively contact your general practitioner.

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan  
WN1 2NN

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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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