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Caring for Seniors with UTI's

What are the best ways to care for someone with a UTI? How can you help manage symptoms? How can you prevent the infection from recurring or getting worse?

If you are caring for a senior with a urinary tract infection (UTI), you may be unsure exactly what you can do to help, but you've come to the right place.

Here are ten steps you can take to alleviate their symptoms and prevent the infection from worsening:

1. Remind Them To Drink Water

Encouraging someone with a UTI to drink plenty of fluids will help flush bacteria out of the urinary tract.

It's best to choose water over other beverages, and it's important to drink at least 64 ounces of water a day.

Consider purchasing a water bottle that clearly labels the fluid ounces. This will help you both track how much water your loved one has been drinking throughout the day.

2. Give Them Medications As Directed

Taking your medications exactly as directed is always important, but for seniors fighting a UTI infection, it's crucial. UTIs left untreated can lead to serious health complications for seniors like kidney failure or sepsis.

Be sure your loved one is taking their prescribed antibiotics as di-

rected. Finishing the entire course of treatment will ensure that the infection is completely cleared.

3. Help Them To Maintain Proper Hygiene

Infections like UTIs spread through bacteria. Helping seniors maintain proper hygiene means that bacteria will be less likely to enter the urinary tract.

Good hygiene tips include wearing breathable underwear and changing soiled incontinence briefs promptly and frequently. For women, proper hygiene also includes wiping from front to back.

4. Set Timers To Remind Them To Use The Bathroom

UTIs can be caused by holding your bladder too long, so it's important to remind seniors to use the bathroom regularly and to empty their bladder completely when they do. That will help prevent UTIs before they have the chance to start.

If a senior already has a UTI, using the bathroom frequently will help them to flush any bacteria in their urinary tract. Plus, getting in the habit of using the bathroom often will help prevent UTIs in the future.

5. Plan Nutritious Meals

Practicing good nutrition, including eating a well-balanced diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables, help to keep seniors' bodies strong to fight infections. Some studies have even linked plant-based diets to a lower risk for developing UTIs.

Meal prepping nutritious snacks and meals for seniors will help them to practice good nutrition.

6. Encourage Them To Stay Active

Did you know constipation can contribute to UTIs? Or that constipation can be prevented by staying active? Helping seniors stay active and encouraging them to move around

can help prevent UTIs and relieve strain on the bladder.

Activities like lifting weights, yoga and dancing to music can all be modified to be done while seated. That means that seniors with limited mobility can stay active with low-impact exercises for seniors, too.

7. Avoid Serving Certain Foods

Certain foods and beverages have been proven to irritate the urinary tract which can worsen UTI symptoms. Help seniors to avoid these foods, including caffeine, alcohol and citrus.

8. Ease Pain And Pressure With Heat

If seniors are experiencing pressure or pain in their pelvis, help to reduce these symptoms with a warm compress or heating pad. Be sure not to place the heating pad directly against the senior's skin and leave it on for no longer than 20 minutes to prevent skin damage.

9. Consider Over-The-Counter Pain Medication

If seniors are experiencing pain or discomfort, you may want to consider giving them over-the-counter pain medication. Medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help alleviate their symptoms.

10. Educate Yourself

Staying educated on the signs, symptoms and unique ways seniors experience UTIs is the first step to recognizing and treating them. Be sure to research UTIs for seniors and lean on health care providers for help.

If the senior's UTI symptoms do not improve within a few days of starting treatment or if they experience severe symptoms, such as fever, nausea, or vomiting, it is important to contact their health care provider for further evaluation and treatment.



Symptoms of Urinary Tract Infections in Older Adults

It may be hard to figure out that an older adult has a UTI because they may not experience the classic symptoms. This may be a result of a slowed or suppressed immune response.

Classic UTI symptoms include:

- urethral burning with urination
- pelvic pain
- frequent urination
- an urgent need to urinate
- a fever
- chills
- urine with an unusual odor

Some older adults, such as those who have dementia or Alzheimer's disease, may not be able to tell you if they are experiencing classic UTI symptoms. They may instead show symptoms such as confusion, which can be vague and mimic the symptoms of other conditions.

Other UTI symptoms may include:

- incontinence
- agitation
- lethargy
- falls

- urinary retention
- decreased mobility
- decreased appetite

What causes a urinary tract infection?

The main cause of UTIs, at any age, is usually bacteria. *Escherichia coli* is the primary cause, but other organisms can also cause a UTI.

In older adults who use catheters or live in a nursing home or another full-time care facility, bacteria such as *Enterococci* and *Staphylococci* are more common causes.

Risk factors for urinary tract infection in older adults

Certain factors may increase the risk of UTIs in older people.

Certain conditions that are common in older adults — including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and diabetes — may lead to urinary retention or neurogenic bladder, increasing the risk of UTIs.

People with these health conditions

may need to wear incontinence briefs, and if the briefs are not changed regularly, an infection may occur.

Several other factors can also increase an older adult's risk of developing a UTI:

- a history of UTIs
- dementia
- catheter use
- bladder incontinence
- bowel incontinence
- a prolapsed bladder

In women

Postmenopausal women are at risk of UTIs because of low estrogen levels. Estrogen may help protect the vagina and urethra from an overgrowth of *E. coli*. When estrogen decreases during menopause, *E. coli* may take over and trigger an infection.

In men

The following factors may increase the risk of UTIs in men:

- a bladder stone



How Much Protein Do Older Adults Need and Why?

Protein is an important nutrient that people of all ages need. Yet, according to recent studies, up to 71 percent of older adults (people who are older than 65 years of age) do not get enough protein in their everyday meals. It is especially important for older adults to get enough protein because as they age, the amount of muscle in their body declines. Decreased levels of muscle mass reduces strength capacities for older adults, which can further impair their ability to perform everyday tasks. Many older adults would benefit from a higher consumption of protein to increase strength,

health and overall quality of life.³ So why aren't older adults meeting their protein needs?

Did you know that when a person ages, their taste buds change? With age and increased use of medications, the sense of taste declines, making many meals and snacks taste bland. This can make some high-protein foods like meat, dairy and legumes also seem bland and unappealing. Needless to say, when food is bland, this can lead to eating less or not eating the food at all. To increase flavor, and overall consumption of meals for this population, it is important to incorporate fresh herbs and spices.

- a kidney stone
- an enlarged prostate catheter use
- bacterial prostatitis (a chronic infection of the prostate)

Diagnosing a urinary tract infection in older adults

Vague, uncommon symptoms such as confusion make UTIs challenging to diagnose in many older adults. If a doctor suspects a UTI, they will likely order a urinalysis along with other

tests to determine the true cause of the symptoms.

A doctor may perform a urine culture to determine the type of bacteria that is causing the infection and the best antibiotic to treat it.

At-home UTI tests are available to check urine for nitrates and leukocytes, both of which are often present in UTIs. Contact your doctor if you take a home test and get a positive result.

Adding a variety of textures, colors and shapes to meals can also aid in increasing appetites for this population.

Protein Tips!

High protein foods can be put into two different categories: animal-based or plant-based. Sources of animal-based protein foods include chicken, turkey, fish, lean beef, eggs, yogurt and milk. Additionally, plant-based protein foods include tofu, nuts, seeds and beans. Below are some tips on how to incorporate these protein rich foods into snacks and meals.

- Have a glass of milk with each meal.
- While cooking for recipes that call for eggs (stir-fries, omelets, etc.) add an extra one!
- Add cottage cheese, tofu, nut butter or yogurt to smoothies.
- For a dessert option, try dipping fruit into cottage cheese!
- Add extra cheese, beans and meat to your casseroles.

Current research has found when older adults eat a higher amount of protein than what's recommended for younger adults, they have improved muscle mass, lower prevalence of breaking bones and a stronger immune system. To find how much protein an older adult may need, a Reg-

istered Dietitian would first weight them. Next, they would take the older adult's weight and run it through an equation. This equation will provide a range of how many grams of protein that older adult would need each day. To simplify this process, check out the chart below.

Body Weight Recommended Grams of Protein Per Day (g/d)

100 lbs	36-55 g/d
125 lbs	45-68 g/d
150 lbs	55-82 g/d
175 lbs	64-95 g/d
200 lbs	73-110 g/d
225 lbs	82-123 g/d

Summary

As a person ages, getting the daily recommended amount of protein can be a challenge. Although it can be difficult, it is important that older adults meet their protein intake recommendations. Meeting protein intake recommendations can improve muscle strength, immunity, and bone health. Making small dietary improvements over time is the key to living a healthy life and improving well-being as you age.

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Ways for Seniors to Remain Active During Winter

Physical activity is good for people of all ages, especially seniors. It can reduce your risk of chronic health conditions, and improve your mood, strength and balance.

Seniors should aim for 2½ hours of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Achieving this can be a challenge during the winter's cold, dark days. Even with these challenges, seniors can do many things to remain active during the winter.

Here are some tips to get you started:

Find resources at a public library.

Most public libraries have a wide selection of exercise videos, books and e-books that focus on low-impact movement.

Attend a virtual fitness class.

Today's seniors are more connected than ever. Use of technology has grown, with more use of virtual technology to connect with friends and family.

Why not use the same technology to participate in an exercise class?

Local fitness clubs, and county aging and disability resource centers offer low-impact virtual classes or one-on-one training services using Zoom or other virtual technology.

Check with your health insurance company about virtual fitness class coverage, as some plans pay for some or all of class expenses.

Follow an online video.

There are thousands of exercise videos online, but don't just scan through social media sites and try to complete the first workout you find. Search for exercise programs specifically created for seniors, and incorporate stretching, strengthening and low-impact cardio. This may include chair yoga, seated strengthening exercises or chair stretching.

Schedule movement into your day.

A body at rest tends to stay at rest. This is especially true when the weather outdoors is bad.

Plan a specific time each day to move. Many people find it best to

complete a workout in the morning when they feel the freshest and the day hasn't gotten away from them.

You can incorporate additional movement throughout your day, such as completing 10 squats while preparing lunch or coffee, putting away laundry one item at a time to walk extra steps, march in place during commercial breaks of your favorite TV show or getting up out of your chair every hour to walk a short distance in your home. Try these 15-minute workouts you can do at home.

Use what you have.

You don't need expensive fitness equipment at home to get a total body workout.

- Use cans of soup or water bottles as hand weights.
- Go from a sitting to a standing position out of a dining room chair two to three times in a row instead of just once.
- Walk up and down a hallway or large open space.
- Go up and down your stairs multiple times.
- Turn up the music and dance in your kitchen.

Get outdoors.

Winters can be cold and dark, but with the proper preparation and equipment, seniors can safely enjoy exercising outdoors. On days when it is icy or there is inclement weather and you do not need to go anywhere, stay inside to prevent falls or slips.

Wear proper footwear.

Wear a pair of lightweight tennis shoes or boots with good support. You also can purchase snow grips for the bottoms of your shoes or boots.

Take your time.

Walks in winter are not a race, and there is no need to hurry. Take small steps, and watch for, and avoid, icy

spots.

Catch up with a friend while exercising, but don't forget to wear a mask.

Incorporate variety.

People tend to focus on only one type of exercise, such as walking. Variety in your routines, incorporating five elements of fitness, reduces boredom and lowers the risk of injury.

Try to incorporate these types of exercise into your routines:

Endurance - These activities increase your breathing and heart rates. Examples include dancing, climbing stairs and brisk walking.

Strength - Strong muscles help seniors remain independent and make everyday activities easier. Examples include lifting weights and using resistance bands.

Balance - These activities reduce the risk of falls. Examples include standing with your feet next to each other, standing on one foot and then the other, and tai chi.

Flexibility - Improves your joints' range of motion and makes daily tasks easier. Chair yoga and stretching can improve flexibility.

If you have heart disease, diabetes, a history of falls, vertigo or other chronic health conditions, talk with your healthcare provider about the types and amount of physical activity that is right for you.

Don't view winter as an excuse to stop exercising. There still are many things that you can do to safely incorporate exercise and movement into your routine.

Learn more from the National Institute on Aging.



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