

IPC Bulletin for Care Homes

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To support Care Home staff, here is some information on good infection prevention and control (IPC) practice.

Beating *E. coli* - What you can do to break the 'Chain of infection'

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) is the most common cause of urinary tract infections (UTI), which can lead to life threatening blood stream infections (BSI).

Three-quarters of all *E. coli* BSI's and the highest number of deaths due to *E. coli* BSI's, occur in community settings, e.g. care homes, home care. Targeting a reduction in UTIs will have a significant impact in reducing bloodstream infections.



What is *E. coli* and how does it cause infections?

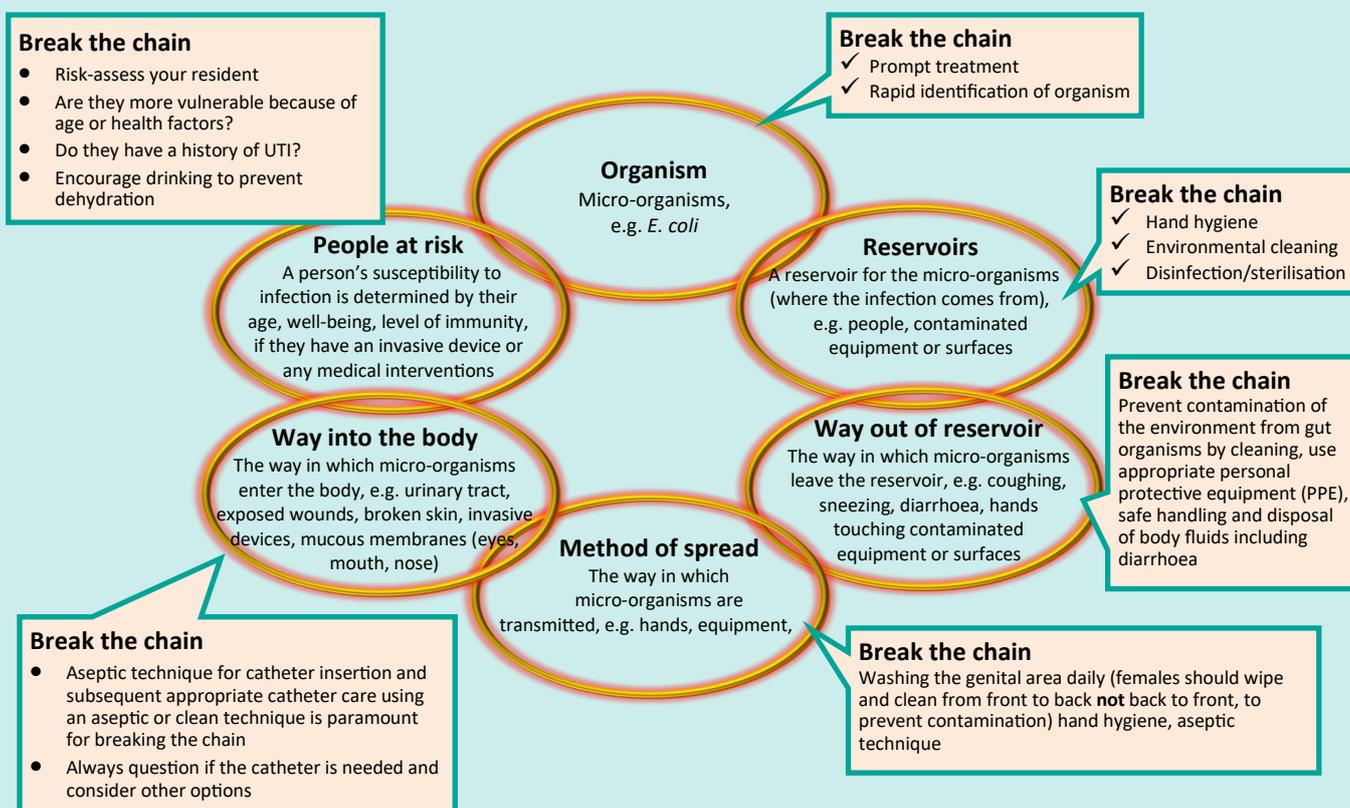
E. coli is a gram-negative bacteria that lives harmlessly in the intestine of people and animals and provides beneficial functions in aiding food digestion, however, when detected in other parts of the body it can cause urine infections, pneumonia, and blood stream infections.

In healthy people an *E. coli* UTI is a less serious problem and causes a lower urinary tract infection (cystitis), but people who rely on indwelling catheters for bladder drainage are at increased risk of UTI's. This is because:

- The catheter is a foreign body in the urethra and bladder, which rapidly acquires a biofilm composed of bacteria
- There is a risk of contamination of the urinary tract during insertion, catheter changes and subsequent catheter care

How you can prevent *E. coli* infections in our community settings

It is important that health and social care staff are aware of how to reduce the risk of transmission of *E. coli*. By applying the concept of breaking a link in the 'Chain of Infection' the *E. coli* journey can be broken, preventing the risk of infection. This example shows how the chain can be broken for *E. coli*



Correct diagnosis of suspected UTIs **not** based on dipstick results and antibiotics prescribed according to guidelines, are also essential to prevent antibiotic resistance and ensure the correct management of the resident.

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk
Call us on 01423 557340

