

IPC Advice Bulletin for Care Homes

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To dip or not to dip? UTIs in those over 65 years OR catheterised adults

The question of whether to use urine dipsticks to aid diagnosis of a urinary tract infection (UTI) is frequently asked. Whilst this test has some diagnostic value in those who are aged under 65, it becomes more unreliable when the resident is over 65 years of age.

In fact, residents over 65 years of age are more likely to have bacteria present in their urine which is not causing any infection. This is called **asymptomatic bacteriuria**. By 80 years of age, half of older adults in care, and most with a urinary catheter, will have bacteria in their bladder/urine, but not have a UTI.

The bacteria in the bladder produce an enzyme which turns nitrates into nitrites which shows as positive on the dipstick. The positive dipstick result happens if the person has a UTI **and** if they have asymptomatic bacteriuria so does not help you diagnose a UTI if the person is over 65 or if they have a catheter.

Group	Symptoms	Urine dipstick	Send specimen
Over 65 years	With new onset dysuria (pain on passing urine) on its own	No	Yes
Over 65 years	2 or more other urinary symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Temperature 1.5°C above normal twice in the last 12 hours ◆ New frequency or urgency to pass urine ◆ New incontinence ◆ New or worsening delirium/debility/confusion ◆ New suprapubic (lower abdominal) pain ◆ Visible haematuria (blood in urine) 	No	Yes
Over 65 years	None of the above symptoms	No	No
Catheterised adults	2 or more urinary symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Temperature 1.5°C above normal twice in the last 12 hours ◆ New or worsening delirium/debility/confusion ◆ New suprapubic (lower abdominal) pain ◆ Visible haematuria (blood in urine) 	No	Yes Check for catheter blockage and consider catheter removal or replacement

What's new:

- Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Care Homes 12th Edition www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/preventing-infection-workbook-guidance-for-care-homes/
- Community IPC Safe management of blood and body fluid spillages www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/safe-management-of-blood-and-body-fluids-policy-for-care-home-settings/
 - ◆ Added - covering a blood or blood stained body fluid spillage with disposable paper towels before applying the 10,000 parts per million available chlorine solution
- Community IPC Venepuncture Policy for Care Homes (Amended July 2023) www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/venepuncture-policy-for-care-home-settings/
 - ◆ Added - If there is a failed attempt, the needle must be discarded in the appropriate sharps container and the procedure repeated with a new needle
 - ◆ Deleted - Removed the word 'sterile' from 'low linting gauze' and 'adhesive plaster'
- QNI IPC Champions meeting 27th July, 2023 <https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/infection-prevention-and-control-ipc-champions-meeting/>
- IPC Training Event for Care Homes: 9th October, 2023 www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/events/infection-prevention-and-control-training-event-for-care-home-and-domiciliary-care-staff/

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download.

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