

Understanding Asymptomatic Bacteriuria (ASB) and Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)



What is a UTI?

A urinary tract infection (UTI) means you have bacteria in the urine **AND** one or more UTI symptoms:

Burning or pain when urinating
(this is the **most common** symptom)



A strong, frequent urge to urinate; urinating more often



Blood in the urine



If you have these symptoms, you may need testing and treatment.

What is ASB?

Asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB) means there are bacteria in the urine, but you don't have UTI symptoms like burning or pain.

- ASB is very common, especially in people living in long-term care facilities.
- ASB does not cause harm.
- ASB does not need antibiotics.



Before using antibiotics, remember:

Confusion, feeling very tired, or falls can have many causes such as depression, constipation, dehydration, poor sleep, or medicine side effects. These are **not** UTI symptoms (even if bacteria are found in the urine) and should be evaluated by a health care provider. Current research shows that prescribing antibiotics for bacteria in the urine without UTI symptoms is not correct and may be harmful.

If you do not have UTI symptoms then you should not be tested or treated with antibiotics.*

*(Exceptions may include pregnancy, patients undergoing urologic procedures or some people who are immunocompromised.)

Why Should You Avoid Antibiotics If You Don't Have an Infection?

Many people get antibiotics when they don't need them. A common reason for this is ASB (bacteria in the urine without UTI symptoms).

Antibiotics should only be taken when necessary, because they can cause the following serious problems:

- **Antibiotic resistance:** bacteria in your body can get stronger and harder to treat in the future.
- **C. difficile infection:** a dangerous illness that can cause severe or life-threatening diarrhea.
- **Side effects:** antibiotics can sometimes cause bad reactions.

