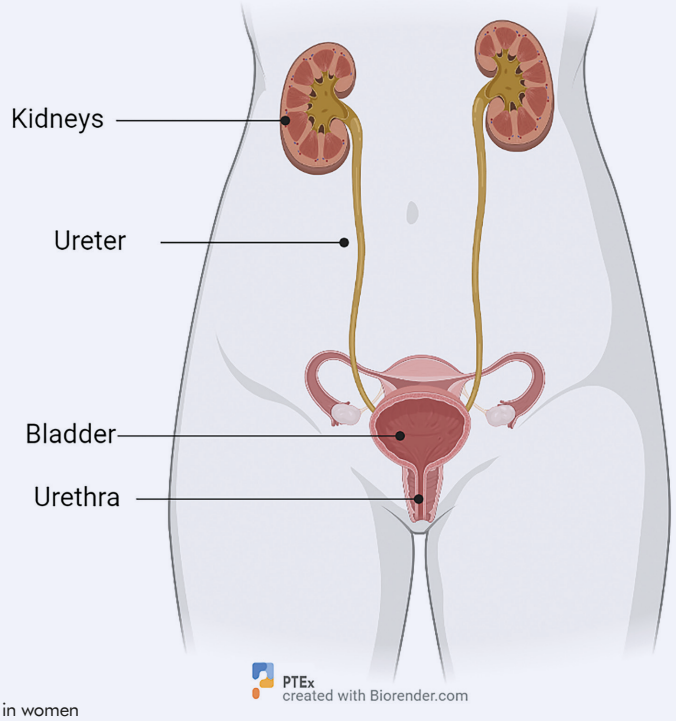
PATHOLOGY TESTS EXPLAINED

Information about pathology tests to help everyone take control of their health and make the right decisions about their care.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **UTI TESTS**

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) affect either the bladder or the kidneys. Bladder infections are more common and are known as uncomplicated UTIs or cystitis. They occur when bacteria get into the urethra and travel up into the bladder. A complicated UTI is when the infection travels beyond the bladder up to the kidneys. This is more serious.

Symptoms include a burning feeling when you pass urine, needing to urinate often, or finding blood in your urine. Sometimes urine can be cloudy and strong smelling. Kidney infections cause similar symptoms but also can cause fever, back pain, nausea and vomiting.



UTIs in women

UTIs are more common in women

UTIs are more common in women than men. If you are a woman and have symptoms that are typical for a bladder infection, your doctor might prescribe antibiotics for a UTI without ordering tests. You'll be offered an antibiotic which is known to work for most UTIs. By far the most common bacterium found in a UTI is E. coli and it can be treated by several different antibiotics. If your doctor thinks tests are needed, they will ask you to collect a urine sample.

It's important that you provide a mid-stream (clean catch) urine sample. This is to reduce the chance of the sample being contaminated by bacteria on your skin. See the other side of this sheet for how to collect a sample.

Testing

Your doctor will start with a urinalysis that looks for signs that an infection is present. This is often done in the doctor's rooms with a dipstick test. If there are signs of infection, your urine sample may be sent to the lab for a urine culture (also known as urine MCS).

In the lab, your urine sample will be checked under the microscope to count the number of white blood cells (pus cells), red blood cells and skin cells. A high number of white blood cells are found when you have a UTI. The presence of lots of skin cells would suggest that the sample is contaminated, and you may need to provide another one.

Next, the urine is streaked onto an agar plate and incubated for 24 – 48 hours at just the right temperature for bacteria to grow. Usually, if you have a UTI, the lab will see a lot of only one type of bacterium growing on the plate (such as E. coli). The lab will then perform susceptibility testing to see which antibiotics will be effective for treating the infection.

Treatment

If you have a bladder infection, you'll probably need to take antibiotics for 3 to 7 days. With a kidney infection you'll need to take them for longer and it is possible you'll need to be treated in hospital.

Further tests

If your doctor suspects that the urine infection has spread to your bloodstream you may need to have a blood test to look for bacteria. Normally, blood is sterile. Most urinary bacteria that also cause bloodstream infections will be detected within 24 – 48 hours. If it's possible that you have a sexually transmitted infection (STI) such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea, then specific tests for STIs will be ordered on the urine sample. In the case of recurrent or chronic urinary tract infections, laboratory tests such as glucose (to check for diabetes) or urea and creatinine (to check kidney function) may also be done.

How to collect a mid-stream urine sample

A mid-stream urine sample means you don't collect the first or last part of the urine that comes out. This reduces the risk of your sample being contaminated. The first part of the stream flushes away the bacteria around your urethral opening.

Your doctor/collection centre will have given you a sterile pot with a lid and a bag in which to put it.

Here are a few steps:

- Wash your hands.
- Remove the lid from the pot. Don't touch the inner surfaces.
- Clean or wipe your genital area.
- Male - retract the foreskin (if uncircumcised) while peeing.
  Female - sit on the toilet seat and keep your legs apart.
  Pass a small amount of urine into the toilet – to a count of three.
- Then fill the pot to about half full.
- Pass the rest into the toilet bowl.
- Replace the lid and tighten.
- Wash your hands.
- Label the pot as per instructions.
- Place the pot in the bag.
  If you can't hand your sample in within an hour you need to put it in the fridge. Make sure you don't freeze it.

Questions to ask your doctor

Why does this test need to be done?

Do I need to prepare (such as fast or avoid medications) for the sample collection?

Will an abnormal result mean I need further tests?

How could it change the course of my care?

What will happen next, after the test?

For more detailed information on these and many other tests go to **pathologytestsexplained.org.au**

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www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au

Please use this QR code to access more information

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Pathology Tests Explained is managed by a consortium of medical and scientific organisations representing pathology practice in Australia. More details at: **www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au/about**

My Health Record

You'll find a direct link to the Pathology Tests Explained website embedded in the pathology results pages of your My Health Record and the my health app.

Click on the link to find information about what your tests are investigating or measuring and what your results can tell your doctor.