



## **An employer's guide to chronic Urinary Tract Infection**

This leaflet aims to provide information to help you support employees suffering from chronic Urinary Tract Infection (UTI). With reasonable adjustments, most people can be supported to continue in work.

Symptoms can vary in severity on a daily basis in that a sufferer can appear fine one day and be in considerable discomfort the next. Chronic health conditions cause more than constant pain; they also cause emotional distress and anxiety.

Unlike an acute UTI attack which usually resolves within a few days usually with a short course of antibiotics, chronic UTI is different. The infection does not clear up but becomes embedded in the wall of the bladder making it more difficult to treat and causing ongoing problems.

Sufferers of Chronic UTI often find it very distressing and embarrassing to discuss their illness, even with family and friends. If your employee comes to you about this condition, please remember it has taken them considerable courage to ask for help.

### **A chronic UTI can cause your employees all or some of the following symptoms**

- An urgent need to pass urine, sometimes with pain before and after
- A need to pass urine many times a day – this can rise to 4 -6 times an hour on bad days
- Pain, usually burning or stinging, when passing urine
- Sleep deprivation through having to get up several times in the night to pass urine
- For women, pain across the pubic bone and lower abdomen and for men, pain radiating into the rectum
- Fever, feeling generally unwell, a dull ache in the lower abdomen and back
- Emotional distress and brain fog/confusion - this can be from side effects of prescribed medication
- Pain on lifting or carrying anything other than light items
- Pain on strenuous activity, including negotiating several flights of stairs

At present, due to lack of research into this condition, sufferers are managed through antibiotics, pain medication and low dose antidepressants (used for pain control). Dietary changes may also be required as well as help with mobility issues. Unfortunately there is no timeframe that can be put on resolution of a chronic UTI but many sufferers continue to work and have no wish to give up working.

### **How can you support your employee suffering from this chronic disease?**

- Discuss their condition with them, identifying tasks which cause them problems and agree to make reasonable adjustments. This will help them continue to work without taking time off and provides them with much needed self-confidence. Talk



about their day-to-day work, including posture, walking, lifting, sitting at a computer and using facilities at work.

- If lifting and carrying are causing problems, if possible designate physical tasks to other colleagues in advance so they do not need to constantly ask for help; this can make it easier for them to do their job and feel less stressed at work
- Agree to time off for medical appointments – this may be more than the norm as the condition often flares without notice
- If your employee has been off work, make a plan with them on their return which could include working from home, a phased return or perhaps discussing a change in their role or tasks

### Some potential practical solutions

- Consider **home-working** with fewer trips to the office/base
- **Sitting:** avoid the need for the employee to sit for long periods, try a pelvic floor cushion or a different chair; encourage a change of position regularly
- **Walking:** base meetings around the individual's location
- **Climbing stairs:** arrange work on the same level where possible
- **Easy access to toilet facilities:** Urinary frequency affects many sufferers of chronic UTI
- **Lifting and carrying:** as for all pregnant women, this should be avoided and such tasks should be allocated to other employees
- **Driving:** avoid the need for the individual to drive long distances where possible
- Incorporating **regular breaks or flexible working hours** for the employee

### Further information

- You can find more information about chronic UTI at <https://www.chronicutiinfo.com/> and [www.cutic.co.uk](http://www.cutic.co.uk)
- Bladder Health UK – <https://www.bladderhealthuk.org/>
- Citizens Advice can give up-to-date employment law advice in order that you and your employee are both fully aware of rights and responsibilities
- Further information regarding the Equality Act 2010 is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>