



URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

Bacterial infections of the bladder or kidneys are common and often frustrating problems for pets and their owners. We call these urinary tract infections or UTI's. Signs of UTI include frequent attempts to urinate, licking at the penis or vulva, discolored or bad smelling urine and even inability to urinate. We find that in MOST cases there are no outward signs of infection at all.

Pets can obtain infections via the blood stream or by bacteria invading from the outside. UTI's are usually diagnosed via a simple urinalysis. In order to know which antibiotic to use and how long to use it, a urine culture is needed. The initial culture is called an MIC. This test will grow the bacteria and determine which antibiotics it is most sensitive to. Most simple UTI's require just 7-14 days of antibiotics to be cleared.

After the course of antibiotics is complete, a follow-up culture should be done. This will determine whether or not the bacteria are gone. This test is less expensive than the MIC because we are not testing for antibiotic sensitivity. If the culture is negative (no bacteria grows) we consider that UTI cured. If the culture is positive (bacteria grows) we then suggest a full MIC be performed (at additional cost) so we can determine if we still have the same bacteria with the same sensitivity profile.

Lots of things can cause repeat bladder infections: using the wrong antibiotics or not using them long enough; kidney infection rather than bladder infection; anatomical defects; bladder or kidney stones; bladder or kidney tumors; prostate disease; immunosuppressive diseases such as diabetes, hypothyroidism or Cushing's disease; or sources of continued bacterial exposure such as severe dental or skin disease. Diagnosing problems like these often requires complete blood profiles, special laboratory tests, radiographs or ultrasound studies.

The first step in handling a problem, or recurrent, UTI is determining if we are simply not clearing the infection, or if we are seeing new infections each time. This is why those follow-up cultures are so important! Some situations that predispose a pet to UTI cannot be fixed. These pets may need to be on long-term low-level antibiotics. Chronic bladder infections are painful and can lead to kidney infections and eventually kidney failure. It is our goal to prevent these problems in your pets.

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