



## **AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO CHRONIC URINARY TRACT INFECTION**

This document provides information to help you support employees suffering from a 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

### **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.
- If lifting and carrying are causing problems, designate physical tasks to other colleagues in advance where possible so they do not need to constantly ask for help
- 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 that could include working from home, a phased return or a change in their role or tasks

As this is a chronic health condition, it is recommended that the employee is referred through your usual occupational health procedure. They will be able to provide full advice and guidance to support the person at work.

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.

## PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR EMPLOYEE

- 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 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

CUTIC [www.cutic.co.uk](http://www.cutic.co.uk)  
Chronic UTI Info [www.chronitutiinfo.com](http://www.chronitutiinfo.com)  
Bladder Health UK [www.bhuk.org.uk](http://www.bhuk.org.uk)

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.

Information on the Equality Act 2010 is available at [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

This information has been compiled by the Chronic Urinary Tract Infection Campaign (CUTIC). CUTIC is a patient group campaigning to raise awareness about chronic UTI, improve testing and treatment for sufferers, and challenge the belief that chronic lower urinary tract symptoms are caused by inflammation rather than bacterial infection.