

A woman is shown from the back, sitting on a couch. A red, glowing area on her lower back indicates pain or inflammation.

Kidney Infection (Pyelonephritis)

What is it?

Kidney infections happen when bacteria enters your body via the urethra (the tube you pass urine through). The bacteria then travels into your bladder and up to your kidneys.

Usually, kidney infections can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics, and you will recover completely.

Sometimes these infections can be severe and this is called pyelonephritis. Symptoms of pyelonephritis include pain, fever and vomiting.

Kidney infections can be more dangerous for some people, such as women who are pregnant, the elderly or those who've had kidney problems before.

What will my GP do now?

You will have a urine test and be given the correct antibiotic to treat the infection. You may also be given paracetamol to help with pain and fever.

You GP may discuss:

- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Having a blood test to check your kidney function
- Doing a pregnancy test if relevant
- Having an ultrasound or CT-scan, if you've had problems with your kidneys in the past

If your infection is severe or complicated, your GP will refer you straight to the Emergency Department. The hospital can give intravenous antibiotics. This means they go straight into your bloodstream. The hospital can also do other tests to make sure you are being well managed.

You might be offered a Hospital in the Home service (see 'What supports are available?').

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you again after 48 hours, to make sure the antibiotics are taking effect. If you still have fever or pain, your GP will arrange for further tests and may refer you to a kidney specialist.

Your GP will see you again towards the end of your antibiotic treatment. At this time your GP:

- Will check that your symptoms are gone
- May retest your urine sample to make sure the infection is completely gone
- May recommend an ultrasound of your kidneys
- May refer you to a specialist

What can I do?

The most important thing to do now is finish taking all the antibiotics you're given, even if you're feeling better. Drink plenty of fluids and keep all your appointments with your doctor.

When should I call an ambulance?



Call Triple 0 (000) immediately if you experience slurred speech or confusion, fever, passing a lot less urine, shallow and/or rapid breathing, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea. These could be symptoms of sepsis, which can happen when the infection spreads to your blood.

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What supports are available?

Hospital in the Home

Hospital in the Home (also known as 'HITH') lets patients with certain common medical conditions have hospital-level care in your own home or in a residential care facility. Highly trained HITH Registered Nurses provide your care.

Recovering at home rather than in hospital reduces your risk of getting other infections. Being in a familiar place may also help your feeling of well-being and speed your recovery.

If you are eligible for Hospital in the Home, you can be discharged earlier from hospital or avoid hospital altogether.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

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| ☐ What symptoms should I look for? | ☐ How long do I need to take antibiotics? |
| ☐ How can I prevent another infection? | ☐ What are the side effects of the antibiotics? |
| ☐ Am I at risk of any further complications? | ☐ Where can I get more help and support? |

Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about kidney infection, the following resources can help:

- **HealthDirect** – kidney infection: [healthdirect.gov.au](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au)
- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases** – kidney infection: [niddk.nih.gov](https://www.niddk.nih.gov)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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