



Urgent awareness gap: 1 in 3 Europeans unfamiliar with cystitis, half unaware women are most at risk

New study highlights need for public education on UTIs amid rising antibiotic resistance

Arnhem, 22 September 2025 – A new international study has uncovered a concerning lack of public understanding about cystitis and urinary tract infections (UTIs) – common health issues that disproportionately affect women. The findings, which also highlight widespread misconceptions about prevention and treatment, underscore the urgent need for education to combat rising antibiotic resistance.

In a survey of over 3,000 adults across France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK, 35% of respondents could not correctly define cystitis as a bladder infection, with some confusing it for a skin condition or even food allergies. Among younger adults aged 18–24, fewer than half (45%) were able to identify cystitis correctly.

A hidden gender gap in awareness

Despite medical consensus that women are significantly more affected by UTIs, only half (51%) of respondents recognised this, while nearly 1 in 5 men incorrectly believed that men are more commonly affected. Encouragingly, awareness was higher among women themselves, with 63% correctly identifying their increased risk compared to just 38% of men.

Missed opportunities for prevention

UTIs are often preventable, but knowledge of basic prevention strategies is worryingly low:

- 71% knew that drinking plenty of water can help.
- Only 43% recognised the importance of proper hygiene (wiping front to back).
- Just 35% understood the need to urinate after sexual activity.
- Alarmingly, 17% mistakenly believed taking antibiotics without medical advice could prevent UTIs.

Only 21% of all respondents could identify all three key prevention strategies, and 1 in 6 couldn't name a single correct preventive measure. Women are three times more likely to identify the three correct ways of prevention.

"Many teenagers today are sexually active without understanding the risks of bladder infections. Young women in particular are more vulnerable because of their anatomy, yet too often they think the contraceptive pill protects them from all risks and that condoms are unnecessary. We urgently need to address this through school education and social media, otherwise we risk a new generation of young women suffering repeated urinary tract infections and even long-term bladder damage," says Jane Meijlink, chair of the International Painful Bladder Foundation.

Antibiotic misuse adds to the challenge

While not all UTIs require antibiotics, 16% of respondents incorrectly believe they are always needed—a misconception that fuels antibiotic overuse and resistance. Even among those affected, awareness of the risks associated with antibiotic resistance is not widespread. Almost half of respondents either underestimated or were unaware of the growing difficulty in treating UTIs due to antibiotic resistance.

"Urinary tract infections affect over 400 million people worldwide and cause approximately 240,000 deaths each year, with rising antibiotic resistance making them harder to treat," said Prof. Gernot Bonkat (CH), chair of the EAU Infections Guidelines Panel. "This study shows that raising public awareness, as well as education about symptoms, causes, and treatment, is still essential to prevent infections, reduce suffering, and slow the spread of resistance. Importantly, not every infection needs to be treated with antibiotics—judicious use is key to combating resistance. "

About UTIs and Urology Week 2025

The survey is part of Urology Week 2025 (22-26 September), an initiative by the European Association of Urology to create awareness of urological conditions among the general public. This year the focus lies on urinary tract infections (UTIs) and in particular cystitis.

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common infections, affecting millions globally. They are the second most common infection after respiratory infections and are significantly more prevalent in women than men. Approximately 50-60% of women will experience a UTI at least once in their lives.

UTIs are a major public health concern due to their high incidence and morbidity. Their financial burden is substantial, estimated at billions of euros annually worldwide. Understanding the prevalence, risk factors, and consequences of UTIs is crucial for effective prevention and treatment strategies. That is why this year Urology Week is focusing on raising awareness for urinary tract infections. For more information about Urology Week, visit <http://urologyweek.org>. For more information about urinary tract infections, please see <https://patients.uroweb.org/condition/urinary-infections>.

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About the survey

The new survey was commissioned by the European Association of Urology (EAU) for its annual Urology Week (22-26 September 2025). Over 3,000 members of the public from Spain, France, Germany, the UK and Italy were asked about their knowledge of and experience with urinary tract infections. The survey was supported by GSK.

The information was sourced in July 2025.

Notes to Editors:

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About the European Association of Urology (EAU)

The European Association of Urology is a non-profit organisation which supports medical professionals working in the field of urology through many of its scientific, professional, educational and awareness-building initiatives. The overarching mission is to raise the level of urological care in Europe, and for many years this has been done through educational and scientific programmes aimed at urologists. Today the EAU represents more than 19,000 medical professionals working in Europe and beyond its borders. For more information see www.uroweb.org

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