

## AMMI Canada position statement on asymptomatic bacteriuria

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### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Up to 50% of elderly Canadians in long-term care facilities have bacteria in their urine without symptoms of a urinary tract infection. This is referred to as *asymptomatic bacteriuria* representing a colonization state—not an infection. The inappropriate use of antibiotics for elderly patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria exposes them to considerable harm and promotes antimicrobial resistance, which ultimately affects the health of all Canadians. Many misconceptions exist regarding urinary tract infections in elderly patients, and the decisions to give antibiotics involve physicians, nurses, pharmacists, family members, and patient advocates. The mandate of the AMMI Canada's Antimicrobial Stewardship and Resistance Committee is to promote better antibiotic use to preserve efficacy (1–37).

### POSITION STATEMENT

Asymptomatic bacteriuria is a common condition in the elderly that does not require investigation or antibiotic therapy unless the individual is undergoing an invasive urological procedure.

### RATIONALE

1. Asymptomatic bacteriuria does not require antibiotic therapy as it represents colonization of the bladder,

common in the elderly, especially those with diabetes, fecal incontinence, immobility, post-menopausal changes, or prostatic enlargement.

2. Foul smelling, dark, and/or cloudy urine without urinary symptoms should not be investigated as these signs are more typical of dehydration than of infection.
3. Confusion, decreased appetite, decreased balance, falls, disorientation, wandering, and verbal aggression alone are not indications for investigation of a urinary tract infection. Before mental status or behavioural changes are attributed to a urinary tract infection other common causes should be considered such as dehydration, drug interactions, sleep disturbances, sensory deprivation, constipation, hypoxia, or hypoglycemia.
4. A trial of rehydration over 24 hours, if possible, is recommended for hemodynamically stable patients who present with changes in mental status and behaviour or function, and who do not have typical urinary tract infection symptoms.

Globally, health organizations and medical societies support this approach to asymptomatic bacteriuria in the elderly. Across Canada, multiple initiatives have been implemented to address inappropriate use of antibiotics for asymptomatic bacteriuria, including AMMI Canada's campaign "Symptom-Free Pee: Let It Be."



## SUMMARY

Unnecessary testing and antibiotic therapy for asymptomatic bacteriuria in the elderly expose them to harm and are contributing to antimicrobial resistance in Canada.

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