



**The Rizzi Difference**  
RIZZI MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATES  
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## **Did You Know?**

### **A change in behavior or is this a urinary tract infection?**

When your loved one starts displaying a change in behavior that comes completely out of the blue, the answer may be simpler than you think. This could be a urinary tract infection (UTI). Even if your loved one is not officially diagnosed with dementia, an elderly person with a UTI can exhibit dementia-like symptoms such as confusion and bizarre behavior. If a senior patient already has dementia, a urinary tract infection may cause behavior changes instead of the physical symptoms that tend to plague a younger person. Whereas most otherwise healthy people display physical symptoms like burning when urinating, elderly patients may not complain of such pain. However, they may start to behave erratically, which is usually what tips off health care providers that something is wrong. If not detected early, infection can lead to serious health problems.

### **About Urinary Tract Infections**

A urinary tract infection can result when bacteria enters the urethra and travels to the bladder and kidneys. According to the National Institutes of Health, women are four times more likely than men to get a urinary tract infection simply because the urethra in a woman is much shorter allowing bacteria to reach the bladder easily.

The symptoms of a urinary tract infection in younger people can include a burning sensation while urinating, pain at the end of urination, frequency, urgency and strong smelling urine.

Older women are at higher risk of infection because they have less estrogen and estrogen can help prevent the growth of bacteria in the urethra.



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Urinary Tract Infections are diagnosed with a simple urine test and are treated with antibiotics.

Dementia patients typically do not complain of symptoms and so careful observation by healthcare providers and loved ones is important. Symptoms of a UTI can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Agitation
- Restlessness
- More difficulty concentrating
- Hallucinations
- Extreme fatigue
- Becoming withdrawn
- Tasks they could do before are suddenly not as easy
- Sudden urinary incontinence or leaking
- Cloudy or even pink or brown colored urine
- Strong odor to the urine

### **Urinary Tract Infections and Dementia**

UTIs can exacerbate dementia symptoms, however, they don't always mean a person has dementia. So why do seniors seem to respond so differently to UTIs? It is thought that because our immune systems are altered as we get older, they respond differently to infections. Rather than pain symptoms, elderly people with UTIs may start exhibiting strange behavior that is completely out of their norm.

The most important thing to remember about the link between UTIs and dementia is that the behavior change is significant and happens fairly quickly, usually over a period of one to two days. Our providers are here to help you distinguish the difference between behaviors associated with dementia and other possible causes, including urinary tract infections.

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