# Women with chronic UTIs face medical dismissal and seek NICE guideline reforms



Chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs) represent a significant, albeit often overlooked, challenge for many women. While discussions surrounding women's health have gained traction in recent years, the plight of those suffering from chronic UTIs continues to highlight systemic issues in medical treatment and understanding. Gardner, who only received a diagnosis in 2023, encapsulates this struggle, illustrating the far-reaching impacts of a condition that not only hinders physical health but also personal relationships and professional aspirations.

Despite being a common ailment, chronic UTIs disproportionately affect women, with estimates suggesting they are three times more likely than men to experience these infections. Yet, many women face misdiagnosis, minimal treatment, and dismissal of their symptoms as mere inconveniences. Gardner poignantly noted, “You would never say to a man who has erectile dysfunction: 'Well, you'll just have to give up sex.’ Yet this is what happens with women all the time.” Her painful experiences exemplify how medical misogyny can manifest in the healthcare system, where women's issues are frequently trivialised or inadequately addressed.

The complexities of chronic UTIs often lead to a cocktail of medication, yet as Gardner attests, this does not guarantee relief from flare-ups. The emotional and physical toll is compounded by everyday choices; she now avoids foods and activities she once enjoyed, such as tomatoes and baths, which might trigger another infection. Research indicates that many women in similar situations report dissatisfaction with their treatment options, particularly regarding the over-prescription of antibiotics that can lead to resistance, as found in a recent study led by UCLA and Cedars-Sinai.

Another challenge is the limited recognition of chronic UTIs within medical guidelines. Gardner is advocating for the formation of a cross-party parliamentary group aimed at elevating the conversation about this condition, emphasising the need for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to develop clearer guidelines. A spokesperson for NICE acknowledged an update to their guidelines on recurrent UTIs in December, asserting their commitment to regular reviews in response to new evidence.

Moreover, the societal implications of chronic UTIs cannot be understated. Recent analyses reveal that over ten per cent of women affected by chronic UTIs have left the workforce due to their condition, illustrating the economic toll of inadequate healthcare responses. Campaigners and MPs have raised concerns about the Health Strategy in the UK, pointing to the alarming gap in provisions for women suffering from chronic UTIs. The need for comprehensive research, better diagnostic tools, and a cultural shift in recognising female pain is pressing. As highlighted in personal accounts from various women, including ongoing frustrations with unhelpful medical advice, the issue extends beyond the individual to encroach on the broader discourse surrounding women's health.

Furthermore, the stigma associated with chronic UTIs often compounds the difficulties these women face in seeking help. Misdiagnoses and the perception that their symptoms are exaggerated lead many to feel gaslighted by the very healthcare system designed to support them. This pervasive environment emphasises an urgent need for heightened awareness and improved treatment strategies that acknowledge the unique hurdles women encounter.

Gardner's mission to lobby for better understanding and recognition of chronic UTIs speaks to a larger wave of advocacy for women's health—a movement aiming to dismantle the barriers that so many women still grapple with today. If successful in gaining NICE's endorsement for clearer guidelines, such efforts could mark a significant step towards addressing the disparity in treatment and recognition of a condition that affects millions of women.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article: Impact of chronic UTIs on Gardner's life and advocacy efforts.
2. Misdiagnosis and mistreatment of women with chronic UTIs.
3. Research findings on dissatisfaction with UTI treatment and antibiotic overuse.
4. Personal accounts of the challenges faced by women with chronic UTIs.
5. Investigative report on the stigma and inadequate treatment of chronic UTIs.
6. Economic consequences of chronic UTIs and their exclusion from the Women's Health Strategy.
7. Personal stories reflecting the broader implications of chronic UTIs.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6299pye272o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/chronic-urinary-tract-infections-misdiagnosis-misogyny/> - An article from openDemocracy discusses how women with chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs) often face misdiagnosis and mistreatment due to medical misogyny. It highlights the experiences of women who have been gaslighted, misdiagnosed, and delayed in receiving proper care. The piece emphasizes the need for better recognition and treatment of chronic UTIs, noting that women are three times more likely than men to get a routine infection, yet their symptoms are frequently dismissed as normal. Experts call for improved diagnostic methods and a cultural shift in addressing female pain.
3. <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/women-with-utis-are-frustrated> - A study led by researchers from UCLA and Cedars-Sinai reveals that women with recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) are dissatisfied with their doctors' overuse of antibiotics and limited treatment options. Published in the Journal of Urology, the research underscores the need for physicians to better understand the causes of recurrent UTIs, develop preventive strategies, and avoid unnecessary antibiotic use, which can lead to resistance. The study highlights the significant impact recurrent UTIs have on women's quality of life and calls for improved management of the condition.
4. <https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/chronic-uti> - An article from Glamour UK shares personal accounts of women suffering from chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs) and the challenges they face in obtaining proper diagnosis and treatment. The piece highlights instances of medical professionals dismissing women's pain and symptoms, attributing them to psychological factors rather than physical conditions. It discusses the limitations of current diagnostic tests, such as the dipstick test, and the need for more accurate and sensitive methods to detect chronic UTIs. The article also touches upon the broader issue of medical misogyny in women's health.
5. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2025-01-09/nobody-cares-the-women-living-with-untreatable-utis/> - An investigative report by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism delves into the experiences of women living with untreatable urinary tract infections (UTIs). The article highlights the lack of research, inadequate treatment options, and the stigma associated with chronic UTIs. It features personal stories of women who have faced multiple misdiagnoses, ineffective treatments, and the emotional toll of living with a persistent infection. The piece calls for increased attention, research, and resources to address the unmet needs of women suffering from chronic UTIs.
6. <https://inews.co.uk/news/health/chronic-uti-urinary-tract-infections-sufferers-condition-government-womens-health-strategy-2313037> - An article from iNews discusses the exclusion of chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs) from the UK's Women's Health Strategy and the impact on sufferers. It highlights the economic consequences, noting that more than one in ten women leave the workforce due to UTIs and other health-related conditions. The piece features statements from MPs and campaigners calling for better recognition and treatment of chronic UTIs, emphasizing the need for the government to address the disparities in healthcare that women face regarding this condition.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-66819073> - A BBC News article shares the experiences of women whose lives have been shaped by chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs). It features personal stories of women who have suffered from chronic UTIs since childhood, highlighting the impact on their work, relationships, and social lives. The piece discusses the lack of medical awareness and the challenges in obtaining proper diagnosis and treatment. It also touches upon the efforts of campaign groups advocating for better recognition and management of chronic UTIs within the healthcare system.