

BLADDER INFECTION, FEMALE

(Cystitis in Women)

BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Bladder infection (cystitis) is a disorder of the urinary bladder (the organ that stores urine). Bladder infections are very common. Up to one-third of all females will have one at some point in their lives.

FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Pressure, burning, or stinging during urination.
- Frequent urination, although the amount of urine may be small; increased urge to urinate.
- Sensation of incomplete bladder emptying.
- Pain in the abdomen over the bladder or lower back.
- Blood in the urine; bad-smelling urine.
- Low fever and, possibly, chills.
- Painful sexual intercourse.
- Lack of urinary control (sometimes).
- A need to urinate more often at night.

CAUSES

The infection is caused by bacteria (germs) that enter the urinary tract system. A woman's urethra opening (tube from bladder to outside) is short in length and close to the anus, which makes it easier for germs to travel from the bowel area. Germs inside the urethra can travel up into the bladder, causing infection and inflammation.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Sexual intercourse.
- Previous urinary tract infections.
- Pregnancy.
- Aging and associated conditions (e.g., menopause).
- Diabetes or other disorder affecting immune system.
- Certain types of birth control. These can include a diaphragm, spermicidal agent, or condom.
- Urinary tract problems (tumors, calculi, or strictures).
- Insertion of an instrument into the urinary tract (e.g., catheter or cystoscope).
- Poor hygiene or incomplete bladder emptying.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Urinate within 15 minutes after intercourse.
- Drink plenty of water every day.
- Get medical care for urinary tract infections.
- Don't douche, use feminine hygiene sprays, or deodorants. Avoid bubble baths.
- Clean the anal area after bowel movements. Wipe from the front to the rear, rather than rear to front.
- Wear underwear that has a cotton crotch.
- Avoid postponing urination. Be sure to completely empty the bladder with urination.
- In women with frequent recurrence of infection, antibiotics may be prescribed for use before or after sexual intercourse or on a regular basis.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Curable in a few days to 2 weeks with treatment.
- Recurrence is common.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Inadequate treatment can lead to chronic bladder infections, kidney infection, and (rarely) kidney failure.

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

Your health care provider may do a physical exam. Medical tests will include a urine test.

Treatment is usually with antibiotic drugs.

Warm baths may help relieve discomfort.

Pour a cup of warm water over genital area while urinating. It will help to relieve burning and stinging.

MEDICATIONS

Antibiotics for bacterial infection will be prescribed. Antibiotics may reduce the effectiveness of some birth control pills. If you are using birth control pills, discuss this with your health care provider.

Urinary analgesics may be prescribed for pain. If phenazopyridine (Pyridium) is prescribed, it will turn the urine color to bright orange.

ACTIVITY

Avoid sexual intercourse until you have been free of symptoms for 2 weeks to allow inflammation to heal.

DIET

Drink plenty of water daily to flush the bladder.

Drink cranberry juice to acidify urine. Some antibiotic drugs have increased effectiveness when the urine is more acidic.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has symptoms of bladder infection.

Blood appears in the urine.

Discomfort and other symptoms don't improve after you have taken the antibiotics for 48 hours.

New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Symptoms recur after treatment.