

## (Bladder Infection or Urinary Tract Infection)

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### Description

Cystitis is an inflammation of the urinary bladder and is commonly caused by a lower urinary tract infection (UTI) in women. It is generally caused by bacteria that may normally be present only at the opening of the urethra. These bacteria are also usually present in the vagina and the rectum. Normally, urine flows out of the bladder, through the urethra, and out of the body. However, sometimes bacteria may make their way up the urethra and into the bladder, leading to infection, and discomfort. Because of the close proximity of the urethral opening to potential sources of bacteria, women are more prone to UTI. Sexual intercourse seems to predispose some women to cystitis.

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### Symptoms

Common symptoms of cystitis include a sensation that one needs to urinate frequently and in small amounts. Burning with urination and/or pressure or pain above the pubic bone may also be present. Some women note blood in their urine. Fever and back pain are unusual for bladder infections, and indicate the need for immediate medical evaluation for a possible kidney infection.

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### Diagnosis

Cystitis is detected by performing a laboratory analysis of a urine specimen. Repeated bouts of cystitis may indicate the need for further investigation. Be sure your health care provider is made aware of the number of infections due to cystitis that you have had.

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### Treatment

Antibiotics are usually used to treat cystitis. Completion of all medication prescribed is essential. A liberal fluid intake, including a full glass of water with medication, and frequent urination are important as it serves to "flush" the bacteria from the bladder. You may also consider these comfort measures:

- Abstaining from intercourse while you have symptoms.
- Soaking in a warm water bath or pour warm water over your urinary opening when urinating to relieve pain.
- Avoiding alcohol, coffee, tea and colas in large amounts.
- Returning for follow-up post treatment urinalysis and possible culture, if instructed by your medical provider.

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### Prevention

The following health habits may help to prevent cystitis:

Maintain an adequate fluid intake and urinate frequently.

Drink 6-8 oz of cranberry juice every day. Some studies suggest that there is a substance in the cranberry that reduces bacterial growth.

Maintain good genital hygiene to avoid unnecessary contamination from the rectum or soiled undergarments. Wash genital area with mild soap and water daily. Always wipe from the urinary opening (front of the vagina) toward the anus after urination or a bowel movement to prevent drawing anal bacteria into the bladder.

Wear panties with 100% cotton crotches for absorbency and avoid wearing tight garments for extended periods of time.

Avoid local irritants such as feminine hygiene sprays, douches, deodorant tampons, deodorant toilet paper and harsh soaps.

#### Remember

*Do not try to diagnose or treat yourself. Many of the symptoms of cystitis are similar to those found with sexually transmitted diseases. Also, if antibiotics are not taken, the infection may travel up into the kidneys and create complications. If you are concerned that you have cystitis, see a health care provider immediately.*

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### For More Information

Student Health Services . . . . . 619-594-5281

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