



# “It hurts to go!” - CYSTITIS

## Cystitis

- More common in females than in males because the urethra or pipe emptying the bladder is shorter in women.
- Patients with diabetes also have an increased chance of urinary tract infection.
- Drinking more than 2 litres of water per day can assist with preventing infections.
- Cranberry juice or tablets are the only “natural treatments” which may help reduce the incidence of infection.

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## Urinary tract infection or cystitis is usually caused by a bacterial infection.

It is more common in females than in males because the urethra or pipe emptying the bladder is shorter in women. The infecting organisms usually enter through the urethra and into the bladder giving symptoms of frequency of urination, burning and stinging and occasionally incontinence, bed wetting and blood in the urine. There may also be cramping lower abdominal pain.

The organisms get into the urethra from the surrounding tissues. A woman does not have to be dirty or lacking in hygiene to get a urinary infection. In sexually active women infection is sometimes massaged into the bladder through the actions of intercourse.

If bowels are not regular or there is diarrhoea on a recurrent basis then there is an increased chance of urinary tract infection.

Some women have a reduction in the amount or quality of mucus which is normally present around the urethra. This usually assists with protection against infection. Sometimes changes in the mucus are the result of a hormonal abnormality.

Patients with diabetes also have an increased chance of urinary tract infection.

Urinary tract infection is usually diagnosed by finding bacteria in a urine specimen at the laboratory where the type of infection is identified and the bacteria are tested against antibiotics to see which are effective. The test generally takes approximately 24 hours. Treatment is often started with the antibiotics most likely to help as judged by the doctor's experience. Usually antibiotics are required from 1 to 5 days.

Drinking more than 2 litres of water per day can assist with preventing infections. Alcohol and caffeine containing drinks (tea, coffee and cola

drinks) can cause significant bladder irritation and worsen symptoms.

After emptying the bladder, the urethra should be wiped from front to back and never in the opposite direction. It is incorrect to rub as if drying with a towel as that will cause further irritation.

It is important to maintain a good regular bowel habit and a high fibre diet is encouraged.

For women who develop symptoms after intercourse, the bladder should be emptied at a reasonable interval afterwards and a glass of water (approximately 400mls) should be consumed. This assists with flushing the bladder out to help keep it clean.

Medications such as Ural or Citravescent change the pH of the urine from acid to alkaline. This has the effect of reducing stinging and irritation at the time of urination. They will not cure infection.

Cranberry juice or tablets are the only “natural treatments” which may help reduce the incidence of infection.

If cystitis is recurrent a doctor should be consulted regarding preventative treatment. Further investigations such as scans or an examination of the bladder with a “telescope” may be necessary. The use of low dose antibiotics or urinary antiseptics may be required to prevent infections. Occasionally a breakthrough infection or possibly a resistant infection can occur despite that.



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