

BLADDER INFECTION, FEMALE

(Cystitis in Women)

BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation or infection of the urinary bladder.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Burning and stinging on urination.
- Frequent urination, although the urine amount may be small.
- Increased urge to urinate.
- Pain in the abdomen over the bladder.
- Low back pain.
- Blood in the urine.
- Low fever.
- Bad-smelling urine.
- Painful sexual intercourse.
- Lack of urinary control (sometimes).
- Bed-wetting in a child.
- Fever, irritability in an infant.

CAUSES

- Bacteria that reach the bladder from another part of the body through the bloodstream.
- Bacteria that enter the urinary tract from skin around the genitals and anal area.
- Injury to the urethra.
- Use of a urinary catheter to empty the bladder, such as following childbirth or surgery.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Increased sexual activity. In women, the cause is often aggravated by bruising of the urethra during intercourse.
- Infection in other parts of the genitourinary system.
- Stress.
- Illness that has lowered resistance.
- Excess alcohol consumption.
- Wearing poorly ventilated underpants.
- Sitting in bath water that contains bath salts or bubble bath product.
- Loss of suspension of female organs.
- Holding urine for too long a period of time.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Drink a glass of water before sexual intercourse, and urinate within 15 minutes after intercourse.
- Use a water-soluble lubricant such as K-Y lubricating jelly, during intercourse.
- Use female-superior or lateral positions in sexual intercourse to protect the female urethra from injury.
- Take showers instead of tub baths.
- Drink 8 glasses of water every day. Avoid caffeine, which irritates the bladder.
- Avoid the use of catheters, if possible.
- Obtain prompt medical treatment for urinary-tract infections.
- Do not douche. Avoid feminine hygiene sprays or deodorants.
- Clean the anal area thoroughly after bowel movements. Wipe from the front to the rear rather than from the rear to the front to avoid spreading fecal bacteria to the genital area.
- Use underwear and nylons that have cotton crotches.
- Avoid postponing urination.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Curable in 2 weeks with prompt medical treatment. Recurrence is common.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Inadequate treatment can cause chronic urinary-tract infections, leading to kidney failure.

TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include urinalysis, careful urine collection for bacterial culture, cystoscopy (examination of the bladder with a lighted optical instrument) and ultrasound.
- Treatment is usually with antibiotics.
- 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 to fight infection.
- Antispasmodics to relieve pain.
- Occasionally, urinary analgesics for pain.

ACTIVITY

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

DIET

- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water daily.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol during treatment.
- Drink cranberry juice to acidify urine. Some drugs are more effective with acid urine.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of cystitis.
- Fever occurs.
- Blood appears in the urine.
- Discomfort and other symptoms don't improve in 1 week.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.
- Symptoms recur after treatment.

Adapted from Instructions for Patients, Sixth Edition, H. Winter Griffith, M.D., W.B Saunders Company.