

Medical Urgent Care  
3158 Glenmore Ave  
Cincinnati, OH, 45211  
5136610555

McKesson Clinical Reference Products: Women's Health Advisor 9.0  
Illustration

## Bladder Infection (Cystitis)

### What is a bladder infection?

A bladder infection, also called cystitis, is a type of urinary tract infection. The inner lining of the bladder becomes inflamed (red and swollen) and the urine is full of bacteria.

### How does it occur?

Bacteria usually cause the infection. Rarely a virus may cause it. The urinary tract is normally sterile (contains no bacteria). A bladder infection occurs when bacteria travel up the urethra and into the bladder.

Women are more likely to have bladder infections than men because their urethra is shorter. The short urethra makes it easier for bacteria from the anus or genital area to reach the bladder. This can happen during such activities as wiping or sexual intercourse. Most infections of the urinary tract are caused this way.

Anything that blocks the flow of urine from the bladder, or causes incomplete emptying of the bladder, provides a place where bacteria can grow in the urine.

### What are the symptoms?

Possible symptoms of a bladder infection include:

- a frequent and urgent need to urinate
- a burning, stinging, or pressure sensation during urination
- a crampy pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen just above the pubic bone or sometimes in the lower back
- a need to urinate more often in the night
- cloudy urine that smells bad
- blood in the urine
- leaking of urine
- fever and occasionally chills.

### How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine you and may ask for a urine sample. You may also have blood tests. More tests may be done if you have had several infections.

### How is it treated?

Bladder infection is a common problem that is usually easily treated. Your health care provider will prescribe an antibiotic to kill bacteria and prevent the spread of infection to your kidneys.

Your health care provider may also prescribe a medicine that helps reduce the pain and spasm of the bladder during the first couple of days. This can turn your urine orange and may stain your clothing.

You may need to return to your health care provider's office after you have taken the entire antibiotic so that another sample of your urine can be tested.

### **How long will the effects last?**

Prompt treatment of a bladder infection with antibiotics usually controls the infection and relieves the symptoms in 24 to 48 hours.

### **How can I take care of myself?**

- Take all of the antibiotic that your health care provider prescribes, even when you feel better. Do not take medication left over from previous prescriptions.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids each day to flush the bladder.
- Follow your health care provider's directions for a follow-up urine test. Your provider may want to test your urine soon after you finish taking the antibiotic.
- Follow your health care provider's recommendation for regular urine testing to check for recurrence.

If you have a fever:

- Rest in bed if your temperature is over 100 degrees F (38 degrees C).
- Ask your health care provider if you should take aspirin or acetaminophen to control your fever. Anyone under the age of 21 with a fever should not take aspirin because of an increased risk of Reye's syndrome.
- Keep a record of your daily temperature.

Call your health care provider if you are not getting better after you have taken the antibiotic for 48 hours.

### **What can I do to help prevent bladder infection?**

To help prevent a bladder infection from recurring, urinate often during the day and empty your bladder completely each time.

In addition women should follow these guidelines:

- Keep the vaginal area clean. Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement. Be sure to wash the genital area each time you bathe or shower. However, use soap only on the outside of your vagina. The chemicals in soap may cause additional irritation.
- Urinate after intercourse. Never combine anal and vaginal intercourse.
- Wear cotton underwear, which allows better air circulation than nylon. Wear pantyhose with cotton crotches.
- Avoid tight clothes in the genital area, such as control-top pantyhose and tight jeans. Do not wear a wet bathing suit for long periods of time.
- During pregnancy, tell your health care provider if you have a history of urinary tract problems. Your provider may order tests for bacteria in your urine before you have symptoms of infection.

For women who have a history of recurrent urinary tract problems, health care providers may prescribe antibiotics to be taken after intercourse to prevent cystitis from recurring.

Developed by iMcKesson Clinical Reference Products.  
Published by iMcKesson Clinical Reference Products.  
Copyright © 1991-2000 iMcKesson LLC. All rights reserved.

Adapted from content provided by iMcKesson, LLC

*Review Date: 4/24/2001*

20108052(26)-05/01-EBS-PHY