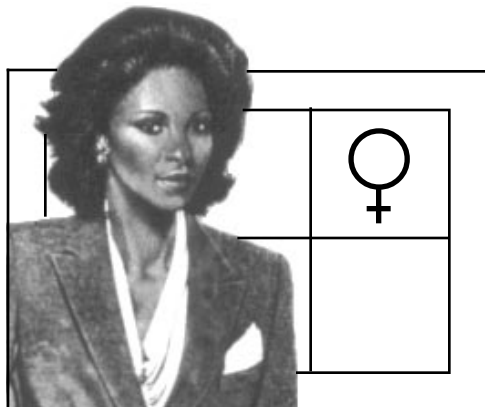


# Bladder Infection



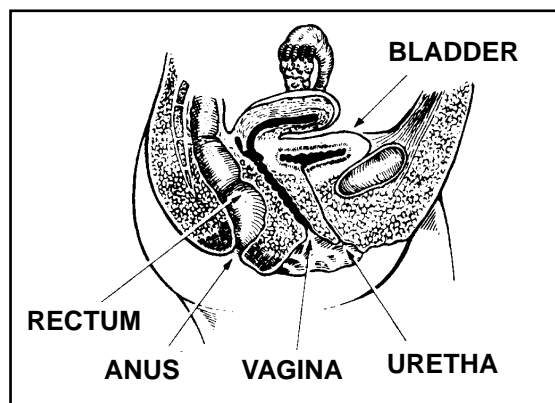
## Helpful Hints for Cystitis In Women



*Do you feel pain or burning when you urinate? Do you need to urinate often or urgently (you gotta' go now!) but pass only small amounts of urine? Do you see blood in your urine? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, you may have cystitis.*

### What is Cystitis?

Cystitis means "inflamed bladder." Second only to colds, cystitis is the most common illness among women (rare in men). In women, the urethra which carries urine is very short. It is also located close to the vagina and anus which are both sources of bacteria. The illness occurs when bacteria grow into your urethra irritating your bladder and making you feel uncomfortable. You can see how easily bacteria might spread to the urethra causing cystitis by looking at a side view of the female anatomy shown next.



### You Can Prevent Cystitis

You can reduce your chances of getting cystitis. Here is a list of helpful suggestions to follow regularly:

- Drink two to three quarts of liquid a day to help dilute bacterial growth.
- Wipe from front to back when bathing or after using the toilet. Cleaning in the opposite direction (from back to front) may carry bacteria from your anus to your urethral opening. This spreading of bacteria can increase your chances of getting cystitis.
- Urinate when "nature calls." Holding your urine increases the time bacteria are in your bladder . . . and gives them a chance to multiply. Plan ahead for those times when you can't get to a toilet (for example, on a long car ride). And always urinate before going to bed at night.
- Urinate after intercourse. Then drink a glass of water so that you urinate again. Urine washes some of the bacteria out of the bladder.
- Wear underpants and panty hose with a cotton crotch. Avoid wearing tight slacks for long periods of time. A buildup of heat and moisture in your genital area may aid the growth of bacteria.
- Don't let anything come in contact with your vagina that has touched your anal area (especially during love making).

■ Change tampons and sanitary napkins often. Bacteria can multiply in menstrual blood.

■ Avoid vaginal deodorant sprays or bubble baths—they may irritate the delicate tissues in your genital area. Douche only if prescribed.

■ Let a health professional check any unusual itching or discharge from your vagina. You may have a vaginal infection rather than a bladder infection. And untreated vaginal infections can lead to cystitis.

## **Get Medical Treatment**

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Do you think you may have cystitis? If you do, call your doctor, nurse practitioner or the Medical Advice Nurse. And be sure to drink lots of water or cranberry juice, urinate frequently, and stay away from alcohol and foods that contain caffeine (for example, coffee, tea, and cola). A heating pad on your lower abdomen or a warm bath may also help. Be sure to tell your health provider that you're taking these steps. Take medication only if prescribed for you.

Your doctor or nurse practitioner will probably order a urinalysis to determine whether you have a bladder infection.

Delay in seeking care may result in more serious infection, worse symptoms, even hospitalization.

If care is sought early in the illness a single dose of treatment (all medicine taken at one time) may be used and the results are excellent. If your symptoms persist for more than 48 hours or if your symptoms get worse, you will need to return to your doctor or nurse practitioner for further evaluation and treatment.

## **While You Heal**

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Your symptoms should be reduced or completely gone within 48 hours after you start the antibiotic prescription. While your bladder is healing, your chances of other bladder infections increase. Sexual intercourse often introduces bacteria into the bladder. Play it safe and avoid sexual intercourse while you are still having symptoms of your bladder infection.

As with any antibiotic, finish all the prescribed pills. If you are pregnant, you will return for a urine culture after treatment is completed.

## **A Final Word ....**

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For medical advice, call your doctor, nurse practitioner or telephone advice nurse. For more information about health and medical subjects, educational programs and community resources, call your Health Education Department.

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If you have any questions or need further information on your medication please speak to your pharmacist.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.