

Treating a Bladder Infection (Cystitis)

What is cystitis?

Cystitis (sis-TIE-tis) is an infection in your bladder that is caused by bacteria. If you have a bladder infection, you may feel pain when you urinate or have an unusually strong need to urinate. You may also urinate more often and have pain in your lower stomach.

What causes the infection?

Bladder infection usually happens in healthy women of reproductive age. It is normal to have bacteria that live around your urethra (yoo-REE-thruh), which is where urine comes out. These bacteria usually are not harmful. However, sometimes they can get into your bladder. You may be more likely to get a bladder infection if you hold your urine for a long time, if you have sex often, or if you are pregnant.

What should I do if I think I have an infection?

See your doctor as soon as possible. You will need to give a urine sample. Most doctors will be able to tell you right away if you have an infection. Sometimes a urine culture is needed,

which means your urine sample will be sent to a laboratory. It takes about three to five days to get the results.

How is it treated?

Your doctor will usually prescribe three to five days of antibiotics. Many women begin feeling better within 36 hours of starting an antibiotic. It may be helpful to drink more water. You can also take over-the-counter pain medicine. Drinking cranberry juice and taking cranberry tablets have not been shown to help.

See your doctor if your symptoms get worse, or if you have nausea, vomiting, or a fever higher than 100.1° F. Rarely, some people will need to go to the hospital because of complications from a bladder infection.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web sites: <http://familydoctor.org/190.xml> and

<http://familydoctor.org/497.xml>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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