

# Dysuria: What You Should Know About Burning or Stinging with Urination

## What is dysuria?

Dysuria (dis-YUR-ee-uh) means pain with urination.

## What causes it?

The most common causes of dysuria are infections, such as bladder infections or urinary tract infections (UTIs). In women, vaginal infections are a common cause. In men, prostate infections can cause it. In both men and women, sexually transmitted infections can cause it. Sometimes using soaps, spermicides, or lotions can cause irritation and pain. Some skin problems can cause dysuria. There are many other less common causes.

## What are the symptoms of a UTI?

When you have a UTI, the lining of the bladder and urethra (yuh-RE-thra) become red and irritated. This can cause pain in your stomach and pelvic area. You may feel the need to empty your bladder more often. You may try to urinate but only produce a few drops or feel some burning as your urine comes out. You may lose control of your urine sometimes. Your urine may smell bad or look cloudy.

Sometimes UTIs spread to the kidneys. Kidney infections may cause fever, chills, sweats, and back pain. These infections need to be treated quickly because they can spread into the bloodstream and make you very sick.

## What should I do if I have dysuria?

Men who have dysuria should see their doctor. Women who have fever, back pain, vaginal discharge, or irritation or sores in the vaginal area should see their doctor. Women with mild dysuria can first try drinking extra water to flush the urinary system. Taking an anti-inflammatory medicine like ibuprofen or naproxen may help. There are also medicines just for bladder pain (some brand names: Azo and Uristat). Women should see their doctor if dysuria continues, if symptoms are severe, or if fever or other symptoms of a more serious infection develop. Sometimes women can be diagnosed and treated without going to the doctor's office.

## What will my doctor do?

Your doctor will ask questions about your symptoms to find out the possible cause of dysuria. If you have an infection, your doctor will give you a prescription for an antibiotic. For many patients, a physical examination may be needed. Often, a urine test will be done in the office or sent to a lab.

Sometimes other tests are needed if the cause is not clear or if there are signs of more serious illness. These may include blood tests, imaging studies, and tests on samples from the urethra or from vaginal discharge in women. Some patients may need to see a bladder and kidney specialist (urologist) or gynecologist.



# Dysuria: What You Should Know About Burning or Stinging with Urination *(continued)*

## Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/urinary-tract-infections.html>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

<http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/kudiseases/pubs/interstitialcystitis/>

Urology Care Foundation

<http://www.urologyhealth.org/urologic-conditions/urinary-tract-infections-in-adults>

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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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