Self-care tips

Cystitis symptom relief

UTI INFORMATION SERVICE

THE UROLOGY FOUNDATION

Self care tips: Cystitis symptom relief

This guide provides evidence based self-care strategies to help relieve symptoms of cystitis. Some women experience symptoms of cystitis even when no infection is present. These symptoms can sometimes improve on their own without the need for antibiotics. If you are prescribed antibiotics for a UTI, it's important to complete the full course, even if you start to feel better. Stopping early may not completely clear the infection, increasing the risk of the infection returning and antibiotic resistance.

Managing a bout of cystitis

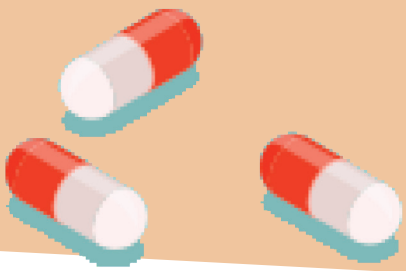
If you're currently experiencing cystitis, these measures may help ease discomfort and support recovery:

Hydration

- Aim to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of water or diluted juice daily, or enough to keep your urine a pale yellow or straw colour.
- Proper hydration helps flush out bacteria and may reduce burning during urination.
- While it might feel uncomfortable to drink more fluids, staying hydrated can speed up recovery.

Pain relief

Over-the-counter pain relievers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help reduce discomfort and inflammation.

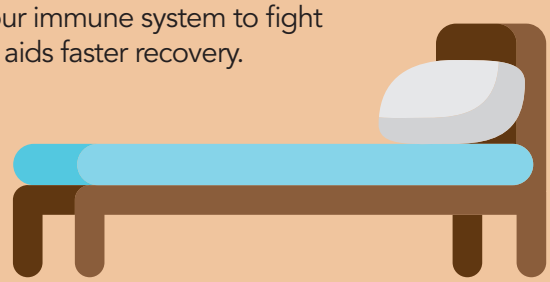


Heat therapy

Applying a heating pad or warm compress to your lower abdomen can help relieve bladder pressure and discomfort.

Rest and recovery

Listen to your body. Getting enough rest allows your immune system to fight infection and aids faster recovery.

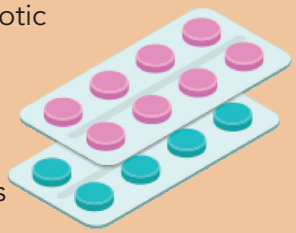


Avoid bladder irritants

Limit caffeine, fizzy drinks, alcohol and artificial sweeteners as they can irritate the bladder and worsen symptoms.

Antibiotics

- If your symptoms persist beyond 48 hours, seek advice from a pharmacist or doctor about antibiotic treatment.



- You may be eligible for self-start antibiotics. This means having a prescription to keep on hand, ready to take at the **onset of symptoms**. Ask your GP if this is a suitable option for you.
- Don't be tempted to start taking old leftover antibiotics

Testing strips and urine samples

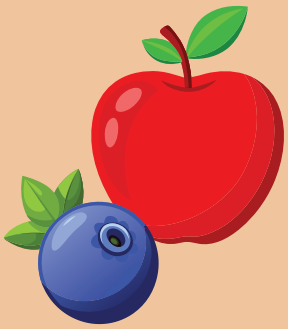
- At-home urine dipsticks (testing strips) can indicate possible infection by detecting leukocytes (white blood cells) and nitrites (bacteria by-products) in your urine.

- These can be helpful for monitoring symptoms but are not always reliable in diagnosing UTIs.
- If symptoms persist, you may need to provide a mid-stream urine sample for lab testing to confirm an infection and determine the most effective treatment.

Refer to our guidance on how to collect a urine sample.

D-Mannose

- A natural sugar that may prevent bacteria from sticking to the bladder wall.



- Found in berries, apples and supplements.
- Often used as a preventative measure, but some evidence suggests it may also help reduce symptoms during an episode of cystitis. More studies are needed.

Urine pH modifiers

Alkalising agents, such as bicarbonate of soda or over the counter cystitis relief sachets from your local pharmacy, can help make your urine less acidic. This can reduce the stinging or burning sensation when you pee. While they may provide symptom relief, they don't treat the underlying cause. If your symptoms persist or worsen, it's important to seek medical advice.

When to seek medical advice

- **If your symptoms are not improving despite self-care, you may need antibiotic treatment.**
- **If you've already taken antibiotics and symptoms persist, see your doctor - a longer or alternative treatment may be required.**

What is a UTI?

A Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is a common infection that can affect anyone, regardless of age, and involves the urinary system but most commonly the bladder. UTIs are the second most common kind of infection after chest infections.

UTIs can be uncomfortable and debilitating. They can be particularly serious in the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. Early detection and proper management are essential to prevent complications.

What are the symptoms?

UTIs can cause a variety of symptoms, which may include:

- Burning sensation during urination
- Cloudy or strong-smelling urine
- Frequent urge to urinate with little or nothing being passed
- Fever or high temperature
- Feeling generally unwell
- Confusion in the elderly

These symptoms can vary in severity, and early detection is important to prevent complications, especially in vulnerable individuals. UTIs can progress to sepsis, a life-threatening condition. Watch for high fever, rapid breathing, and confusion.

Urgent help - If symptoms worsen quickly or you experience any severe symptoms mentioned above, immediate action is necessary: Call NHS 111 for guidance or to find out if you have severe symptoms and need urgent medical care.

For more detailed information on managing and treating UTIs, please refer to our specific treatment-focused information on our website:
https://www.theurologyfoundation.org/urology-health/bladder-conditions/urinary-tract-infections-uti/

For information on the references we have used and information on further reading please contact nurse@theurologyfoundation.org

Our confidential UTI Information Service is here to help you:

0808 801 1108 **Helpline open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am - 12 noon**

nurse@theurologyfoundation.org

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www.theurologyfoundation.org

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