

Patient Information:

## Lower Urinary Tract Infection

### CYSTITIS AND URETHRITIS

The urine you produce in your kidneys is stored in your urinary bladder until it is excreted. When you urinate, urine leaves your body by way of your urethra. This pamphlet discusses some problems associated with the bladder and urethra.

#### *What is cystitis?*

Cystitis is inflammation of the urinary bladder usually caused by bacteria. Cystitis is not a sexually transmitted disease, but sexual intercourse does increase the risk of cystitis (bladder infection) in women.

#### *What is urethritis?*

Urethritis is inflammation of the urethra. Like cystitis it can be caused by infection. Unlike cystitis, urethritis resulting from infection is often caused by sexually transmitted organisms and urethritis is a sign of a sexually transmitted disease such as chlamydia or gonorrhea.

### DEMYSTIFYING CYSTITIS

Cystitis is an infection of the urinary bladder usually caused by bacteria that inhabit the rectum and G.I. tract. Many cases of cystitis in women occur after these bacteria are introduced into the urethral opening during sexual intercourse. Women are more prone, anatomically, to cystitis infections than men, because their urethras are shorter and closer to their rectal openings than men's.

Three documented risk factors for cystitis are:

1. An inadequate fluid intake,
2. Not urinating when the urge is present,
3. Sexual intercourse

### SYMPTOMS OF CYSTITIS

- ◆ A constant urge to urinate
- ◆ Discolored or bloody urine
- ◆ Painful or burning urination
- ◆ Sensation of straining at the end of urination
- ◆ Feeling that the bladder is never empty
- ◆ If you experience any of the above symptoms, go

to SHC for a urinalysis (a urine test). If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms AND chills and/or fever, you need immediate treatment. In either case, do not attempt to treat yourself, and do not take any drugs **not** prescribed for your condition. Taking inappropriate medications could affect your urinalysis and impede your treatment.

### CYSTITIS TREATMENT

If you have cystitis, your SHC health care provider may prescribe antibiotics to treat your infection and/or a medication to relieve your discomfort. Take the antibiotics exactly as prescribed (see the VT SHC pamphlet titled *Using Antibiotics Correctly* for more information on antibiotics). As part of your treatment, you should follow the instructions for cystitis prevention - especially concerning fluid intake and urination! If you experience three or more episodes of cystitis in a six month period, talk to your health care provider about other treatment options.

The following should help speed your recovery and relieve some discomfort:

- ◆ Avoid caffeine. Coffee, tea, cola, chocolate, and some over the counter pain relievers (check the medication label) contain caffeine.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol and carbonated drinks.
- ◆ Avoid sexual intercourse.
- ◆ Avoid sports.

### ALWAYS THINK ABOUT CYSTITIS PREVENTION

- ◆ Avoid introducing rectal bacteria into your urethra after using the bathroom by wiping from front to back.
- ◆ Drink at least 6-8 glasses (12oz/glass) of water daily and at least 1-2 glasses before bedtime.
- ◆ Urinate when you get the urge, particularly when you awake during the night.
- ◆ Urinate immediately after sexual intercourse.
- ◆ Wear natural-fiber (e.g., cotton) underwear and loose fitting clothes, particularly while sleeping.

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## HONEYMOON CYSTITIS

Some women regularly (or occasionally) have cystitis like symptoms for several days after intercourse but do not have bacterial infections. This condition is sometimes called "honeymoon cystitis." Unfortunately, the term is misleading; "honeymoon cystitis" is actually a form of urethritis. For women with honeymoon cystitis, the irritation and bruising that sometimes accompany intercourse causes their symptoms. If you experience cystitis symptoms, go to SHC to be checked. If your health care provider determines that you do not have a bacterial infection, but instead you suffer from honeymoon cystitis, talk with them about ways that you can prevent it. Many women find that using water-based lubricants during sexual intercourse eliminates many of their symptoms. Your SHC health care provider can discuss individual preventive measures with you.

## URETHRITIS

Urethritis is an infection and/or inflammation of the urethra. Sexually transmitted bacteria, particularly chlamydia and gonorrhea, typically cause urethritis. However, other types of bacteria can also cause urethritis.

## THE SYMPTOMS OF URETHRITIS

- ◆ Painful or burning urination
- ◆ Discharge from the urethra

Urethritis often has no noticeable symptoms

## TREATMENT OF URETHRITIS

You should come to SHC for an examination and STD screening if:

1. You experience any of the above symptoms or
2. You recently engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse with a new or infected partner.

Depending on the results of your tests, your SHC health care provider may prescribe antibiotics for you. Take them exactly as prescribed (see the VT SHC pamphlet titled *Using Antibiotics Correctly* for more information on antibiotics).

## PREVENTING URETHRITIS

- ◆ If your SHC practitioner determines that you have urethritis, your sexual partner(s) probably needs to be treated for it also. Talk to your health care provider about this.
- ◆ Avoid sexual intercourse with all previous partners until they have been examined and, if necessary, treated for urethritis.

Remember that urethritis is usually sexually

transmitted; if you are going to have sexual intercourse, use condoms and spermicides consistently and correctly with every sexual act.

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**NEVER USE VAGINAL  
DEODORANT SPRAYS OR DOUCHES!**

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