



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Inflammation (redness and soreness) or infection of the urethra. The urethra is the tube that carries urine out of the bladder when you urinate. In women, it is about an inch long. In men, it is the full length of the penis. Urethritis can affect all ages and both sexes. In women, it often occurs along with a bladder infection or inflammation (cystitis).

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Painful or burning urination. The pain can be severe.
- Discharge that may be cloudy, yellow-green mucus, or may be watery and white.
- Genital itching.
- Frequent urge to urinate, even when there is not much urine in the bladder.
- Men may have no symptoms.

### CAUSES

- An infection that is spread by a sexual transmitted disease (STD). Most common causes are gonorrhea and chlamydia. Less often, herpes virus, human papilloma virus (HPV), trichomoniasis, and other infections are the cause. Non-specific urethritis (NSU) is the term used when there is infection present, but the cause is unknown.
- Lower estrogen levels in postmenopausal women.
- Yeast infection in women.
- Other causes could be from an injury or surgery, or from a chemical such as an antiseptic. Bubble bath or bath oils have been known to cause urethritis. This type of urethritis can not be spread to anyone else.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Bacterial infection that spreads and enters the urethra from the skin around the genitals and anal area.
- Contact with an infected sexual partner.
- Use of a urinary catheter (tube used to remove urine).
- Multiple sexual partners.
- High-risk sexual behavior.
- Current or previous sexually transmitted disease.
- Loss of estrogen in postmenopausal women.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Practicing safer sexual behaviors. This includes having only one sexual partner and using rubber (latex) condoms to help protect against infections.
- Keep the genital area clean and dry. Use plain, unscented soap. Be sure sexual partner is clean.
- Avoid irritants and chemicals that cause redness, burning, or itching in the genital area.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME

Proper treatment usually brings complete recovery.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Complications are rare, unless it is not treated, or treatment is not adequate.
- In women, urinary tract infections, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), or infertility may occur. There is also a risk of complications in pregnancy and in a newborn.
- In men, urinary tract infections or prostatitis (prostate infection) may occur.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will usually do an exam of the genital area. Medical tests may include blood studies and a culture of urine and any discharge.
- Treatment will depend on the cause.
- Drugs may be prescribed. If infection is present, your sexual partner(s) will sometimes need treatment also.
- If the cause is trauma or chemical irritants, avoid the source of injury or irritant.
- To relieve pain, take sitz baths by sitting in a tub of warm water for 15, minutes at least twice a day.
- Keep the area around the genitals clean. Use unscented, plain soap.

### MEDICATION

- Antibiotics for infection will usually be prescribed. Finish the complete dose, even if symptoms clear up.
- In cases of severe pain, phenazopyridine (Pyridium) may be prescribed. Pyridium produces bright orange (tea) colored urine.
- In menopausal women, estrogen applied to the vaginal area, or taken by mouth may be helpful.

### ACTIVITY

Avoid sexual intercourse until you have been free of symptoms for 2 weeks. Otherwise, no limits.

### DIET

- Drink 8 glasses of water (or other fluid) every day.
- Drink cranberry juice to acidify urine. Some drugs are more effective when urine is more acidic.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of urethritis.
- Symptoms worsen or new symptoms occur after treatment.

Special notes:

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More notes on the back of this page