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Approximately four in five women will experience cystitis in their lifetime. An infection or inflammation of the bladder, cystitis symptoms most commonly comes from a lower urinary tract infection (UTI).

Usually only affecting your bladder, the cystitis infection could, in more serious cases which are left untreated, escalate resulting in an upper urinary tract infection in the ureters or kidneys.

Here we look at the options for the treatment of the symptoms of the cystitis, as well as how to avoid it and the symptoms you may experience.

Can it be prevented?

If you suffer recurring bouts of cystitis, or if you would like to know how to try to reduce the possibility of a cystitis outbreak, consider the following:

Hygiene

In many cases, women can “overcompensate” and wash their nether regions too often, which causes more harm than good.

Over-cleaning “down there” may alter the normal balance of protective mucus. Washing gently, once a day is sufficient.

Drink

To flush out your bladder, drink lots of water and avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can irritate your bladder. Caffeine has diuretic properties that can lead to an urgent need to urinate – thus aggravating cystitis.

Healthy, hydrated urine is the colour of straw, anything darker means you need to drink more fluids.

Underwear

Wearing cotton underwear and changing daily can help avoid cystitis. Tight-fitting trousers and tights create warm, moist, airless conditions, specifically around your genitals making it a breeding ground for bad bacteria.

Symptoms to watch out for

Common cystitis symptoms can include but are not limited to:

• Burning or stinging sensations when you pass urine.

• A frequent urge to urinate.

• Feeling that you can't fully empty your bladder.

More serious symptoms include:

â€¢ Blood in urine,

â€¢ Abdominal pain or backache.

â€¢ Fever, temperature and weakness.

Talk to your doctor if you experience any of these.

Treatment of Symptoms

As mentioned already, the first course of action when you begin experiencing one or all of the above symptoms is to drink plenty of water. Consuming 1.2 litres â€” around 6-8 glasses of water â€” every day is generally good for your health and will help to â€œflushâ€™ your system.

Other options include over-the-counter cystitis treatments which provide symptom relief. If symptoms progress your GP may prescribe a course of antibiotics.

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