

## URETHRITIS

### What is it?

Urethritis is an inflammation or infection of the tube that runs from the bladder to the outside (urethra). Often the bladder itself is inflamed or infected (cystitis). The problem is more common in women than men, mostly because women have a much shorter urethra making it easier for bacteria to enter.

There are many reasons for the cause of urethritis ranging from infection by certain organisms, injury or trauma to the area or exposure to irritating bath products. Gonorrhea is one type of bacteria that can cause this problem; Chlamydia is another. Yeasts and other bacteria can also cause non-specific urethritis (meaning non-gonorrheal). Unprotected sexual intercourse puts an individual at higher risk for becoming infected with an STD. Likewise, intercourse can be the source of trauma by bruising the urethra. Any bacterial infection in the area of the genitals or anus can spread to the urethra. Catheterization can also cause urethritis.

Rarely, urethritis is associated with syndromes such as Stevens-Johnson syndrome and Reiter's syndrome. Reiter's syndrome can appear after a chlamydial infection.

### Signs and symptoms:

- \* Pain and burning upon urination.
- \* Need to urinate frequently even after emptying the bladder.
- \* Intercourse is uncomfortable.
- \* Temporary impotence in males.
- \* Discharge that may be whitish, yellow-green, or watery, with flecks of mucus.
- \* Leaking of small amounts of urine.
- \* Lower abdominal pain in the area of the bladder.
- \* Lower back pain may mean something more serious; possibly a spread of the infection to the kidneys.

### Treatment:

- \* Diagnosis is based on symptoms, analysis of urine, and possibly a blood test. Sometimes a culture is taken from the genitals to see if any infection is present.
- \* Antibiotics for infection; this includes any sexual partners as well. Take your antibiotics as prescribed and **FINISH THEM ALL EVEN IF SYMPTOMS SUBSIDE!!**
- \* Drink lots of fluids, at least 8 glasses a day, and urinate frequently. Cranberry juice may help; it acidifies urine and some drugs work better under a more acidic condition.
- \* Wash your genital area daily with perfume and dye-free soaps.
- \* A medication to decrease urethral spasms and pain may be prescribed. This will produce urine that is bright orange in color.
- \* Avoid sexual intercourse for two weeks after symptoms subside. Use condoms and a water-soluble lubricant like KY jelly. Women - drink a glass of water before intercourse and urinate immediately afterward (within 15 minutes).

- \* Avoid caffeine and alcohol until your symptoms go away.
- \* Women - wipe from front to back. Avoid tub baths; shower instead.
- \* Men - don't pull back skin from around urethral opening.

**CALL OUR OFFICE IF:**

- your symptoms don't improve within one week of treatment.
- you have blood in your urine or bleed from the urethra.
- you experience a temperature of 101 degrees or higher.
- low back pain develops.
- new symptoms develop.