

Urinary Tract Infection

Naturopathic treatment for women's health.

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Ten to twenty percent of all women have some kind of urinary discomfort or infection at least once a year. Acute uncomplicated cystitis and recurrent cystitis are two important categories of urinary tract infections in adults. Sexual intercourse, diaphragm use and a spermicide, possibly spermicide used alone, delayed post-coital urination, and a history of a recent urinary tract infection, all increase the risk of infection.

Women who present with painful urination usually have either acute cystitis; acute urethritis due to *Chlamydia trachomatis*, *Neisseria gonorrhoea*, or herpes simplex virus; or vaginitis due to candida or trichomonas. These problems can usually be differentiated on the basis of presenting symptoms, physical exam and urinalysis. A urine culture, vaginal culture and Chlamydia testing may be needed to differentiate the location and type of infection.

Postmenopausal women may also have frequent infections and are often due to residual urine after voiding or the lack of estrogen causing marked changes in the vaginal microflora including loss of lactobacilli and increased colonization by *E. coli*. These women often benefit from the use of prescription vaginal estrogen cream.

For most bladder infections, a naturopathic approach is usually very effective and the infection resolves quickly and without recurrence or complications. The primary goals are to:

1. Enhance internal defenses against the infection by providing immune support.
2. Restore vaginal microflora
3. Promote a proper pH
4. Prevent bacteria from adhering to the bladder epithelium.

Increasing the urinary flow is important and easily accomplished by increasing the quantity of liquids. Water and herbal teas related to the treatment goals are the most logical choices. 64 ounces is the common recommendation. No natural approach to cystitis would be complete without mention of **cranberry**. Recent studies have shown that cranberry reduces the ability of *E. coli* to adhere to the lining of the bladder and urethra. One of the most useful herbs for bladder infection is **uva ursi**. **Pipsissewa**, a Native remedy of the Pacific Northwest, is a traditional remedy for urinary infections. Other naturopathic remedies include the use of **D-Manose**, and **buchu leaf**. Homeopathy is very effective as well. There are over 20 different homeopathic remedies for UTI's and need to be individualized to the woman's symptoms.

Naturopathic treatments for urinary tract infections in women are very safe and effective once other causes of UTI symptoms are ruled out. If treated early and appropriately a urinary tract infection resolves quickly and without complications.

