

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.

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.

CAUSES

- An infection that is spread by a sexual transmitted disease (STD), such as gonorrhea and chlamydia. Less often, herpes virus, human papilloma virus (HPV), trichomoniasis, and other infections are the cause. Nonspecific urethritis (NSU) is the term used when there is infection present, but the cause is unknown.
- Lower estrogen levels in postmenopausal women.
- In women, it is often associated with a bladder or yeast infection.
- 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.
- Use of a urinary catheter (tube used to remove urine).

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Practice safer sexual behavior, such as having only one sexual partner and using latex condoms to help protect against infections.
- Keep the genital area clean and dry, use only plain, unscented soap and be sure sexual partner is clean.
- Avoid irritants and chemicals that cause redness, burning, or itching in the genital area.
- You may need to take showers instead of tub baths, if the irritant is soap, shampoo or other item used in the bath.

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.

MEDICATIONS

- In cases of 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.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medication. This medication may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)

- ↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ↳ Antibiotics may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.
- ↳ Avoid all sexual activity until you have been free of symptoms for 2 weeks.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- You experience an increase in pain or swelling, are unable to void, or develop a fever.
- New symptoms develop or symptoms do not go away as expected.