

The following herbs can be taken as a tea or added to meals during an acute infection, although they don't have the immediate soothing effect of the previous herbs. Taking them after an infection can also be beneficial as they are excellent tonics for the urinary system, including the kidneys.

Parsley. Eat as much as you can, drink the tea or put it in vegetable juices. Tabouli is a great way to eat a lot!. Parsley is very high in vitamins A and C, both of which are great for the kidneys and the immune system.

Dandelion. You can drink a tea made from the fresh or dried leaves, or toss the fresh leaves into salads. The root is available as a 'coffee' alternative - the non-instant version is best. High in vitamin A and important minerals like potassium, a great tonic for the kidneys and the liver.

Horsetail has a cleansing effect on the urinary system, and is particularly helpful if there is blood in the urine - usually blood is only seen under a microscope, so always see your doctor if you can actually see blood.

Celery has a mild diuretic effect, so eat lots in salads, soups or fresh vegetable juices. The seeds can be used to make a stronger tea for use in infections.

REMEMBER, always seek professional advice before taking supplements or herbal medicines. It is usually best to take any single nutrient at the same time as a good multivitamin AND never take doses higher than the recommended unless you're doing it under professional supervision.

Cystitis & natural remedies

Cystitis is an infection and/or inflammation of the urinary tract (urethra) and bladder. There are many different types - bacterial, viral, acute, chronic or cystitis associated with hormonal changes. Infection is not always present or obvious, although symptoms of discomfort, burning on urination, urgency and frequency are common.

If you regularly experience cystitis, having a full assessment by a Naturopath can help to find out what may be causing it - this can be different for each woman and may require a check-up with your doctor also. Once you know the triggers, your Naturopath can better assist you with strategies and natural treatments for prevention.



The following information is intended as a general guide only for mild cystitis and should not replace professional assessment.

You are more likely to get cystitis if your resistance to infection is low. This can happen from excessive stress, overwork, poor diet or generally feeling rundown. Of course managing your stress and eating well are fundamental to a healthy immune system, not just to prevent infection but also to reduce any inflammation in the body. There are also hygiene issues you should discuss with your doctor or health nurse.

Healthy eating tips...

- eat lots of raw and fresh vegetables and fruits every day
- get plenty of fluids in the form of plain water, herbal teas or light soups
- choose good quality protein foods like fish, legumes and beans, eggs and raw nuts and seeds - these foods are anti-inflammatory as well as helping to keep your immune system strong

Watch out for... sweet and sugary foods; starchy carbohydrates found in cakes, white bread and pastries; too much red meat, chicken and processed meats. All these foods tend to acidify the urine, making pain and inflammation worse. They can contribute to associated problems like thrush or candida, and also tend to make any infection worse.

During an acute attack....

- drink lots of fluids (up to 3 litres daily) in the form of water and herb teas to help 'flush' out infection and soothe inflammation
- diluted and (preferably) unsweetened cranberry juice helps flush out bacteria by not allowing them to 'stick' to the lining of the urinary tract; cranberry in tablet form may be more helpful for some women
- avoid caffeine drinks and alcohol as these are all irritating to inflamed tissue
- include fresh garlic - add it at the end of cooking to maintain its strong anti-bacterial effect
- alfalfa sprouts are fantastic to help make the urine more alkaline - you can also drink the herb tea
- cut out all sweet treats and foods during an acute infection

- avoid yeast foods like vegemite, soy sauce, beer - these can promote more of the unhealthy bacteria which make it harder to fight any infection
- acidophilus as a supplement helps to restore friendly bacteria in the whole system; if you're taking antibiotics, have the acidophilus 2 hours after the antibiotic, and continue after you've finished the antibiotic course
- take extra vitamin C, up to 5 grams daily during an infection, and continue 1-3 grams as a maintenance dose if you experience chronic cystitis

Help from herb teas...

The following herbs are great as teas - make it like you would a black tea (ie. no milk). For a more-than-mild infection, or if you are getting recurrent infections, herbs as a fluid extract may be needed. These are a much stronger medicine than the teas, and are available through consultation with a Naturopath or Herbalist.

Uva ursi (or Bearberry) & Corn silk are very soothing and particularly useful in acute infections

Couch grass can help relieve burning pain. You can dig it up from your garden, clean the roots and strip off the leaves, then cut up the white parts and use them to make a tea.

Barley water is very soothing for the urinary tract. To make fresh, cover 2 tablespoons of barley with several cups of boiling water plus 1 teaspoon of honey. Allow to stand covered for a few hours, then strain and drink. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.