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Honeymoon cystitis: what is it and how to avoid

Honeymoon cystitis isn't something you need to worry about specifically on your honeymoon. The term is just a nickname for cystitis that's triggered by sex, and it can occur at any time. In fact, most women will experience cystitis at least once in their lives.

What is honeymoon cystitis?

Cystitis is a common [urinary tract infection \(UTI\)](#) that's usually caused by a bacterial infection. Among other [possible symptoms](#), this can cause a frequent and strong urge to pee, and a burning sensation when you do.

As for honeymoon cystitis, Dr Melanie Bone, a female health specialist and medical board member for [Daye](#), explains that this is the same thing.

"Cystitis is sometimes referred to as "honeymoon cystitis" because it often occurs in women and assigned female at birth (AFAB) individuals shortly after they engage in vaginal penetrative sex. This nickname has arisen from the observation that there is a correlation between sexual activity and developing cystitis. But not every person increases their chances of cystitis after sex."

What causes honeymoon cystitis?

The most common cause of cystitis, including honeymoon cystitis, is a bacterial infection. Dr Bone says: "The most common bacteria involved is *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), which normally resides in the gut but can enter the urethra - the tube that carries urine - and reach the bladder, leading to an infection."

Women are much more likely to develop this infection than men because the urethra, the tube that carries pee from the bladder out the body, is shorter and closer to the vagina and anus. This makes it easier for bacteria to enter.

Honeymoon cystitis refers specifically to getting cystitis after sex – a common trigger, but an outdated nickname that doesn't reflect the average [sex life](#) of people today. The act of sexual intercourse can move bacteria that's around the vagina to the entrance of the urethra. "Using certain [contraceptives](#) – such as [diaphragms](#) or spermicides – can also increase your chance of cystitis," adds Dr Bone.

There are [other triggers](#) that can increase your chances of cystitis, and these are different in men and women.

How common is honeymoon cystitis?

There's no data for cystitis after sex, but we do know that cystitis in general – no matter it's trigger – is common in women, and that vaginal sex is one of the biggest catalysts.

Cystitis is one of the most common infections in women¹. Around 1 in 3 women will have cystitis by age 24, and 1 in 2 by age 32. In contrast, the infection is very unlikely to develop in men – fewer than 10 cases per 10,000 men under age 65 are reported each year².

How long does honeymoon cystitis last?

It's not the cause of cystitis that determines how long it lasts, but rather the severity of the infection and how well you respond to [antibiotic medication](#). Often, your symptoms can improve within a few days of starting treatment.

If this happens, Dr Bone warns that you still need to complete the full course of antibiotics prescribed to you by your doctor, as this ensures the infection is fully cleared.

"It's important that you do seek treatment for cystitis," Dr Bone says. "If left untreated, your symptoms may continue or get worse, and could lead to conditions as serious as kidney failure."

How to treat honeymoon cystitis

Your doctor will typically prescribe you a course of antibiotics to clear the bacterial infection. According to Dr Bone, a three-day course is common for treating cystitis and other community acquired and uncomplicated UTIs.

In addition to antibiotics, your doctor may recommend you purchase pain relief, such as ibuprofen, to help relieve your discomfort and reduce inflammation.

To help speed up your recovery, Dr Bone also has this advice:

- Drink plenty of water and pee frequently – to help flush the harmful bacteria out of your body.
- Take a course of [probiotics](#) – to help replenish the good bacteria in your gut and vaginal area after a round of antibiotics.

How to prevent honeymoon cystitis

If you're female or AFAB and sexually active – regardless of being on your honeymoon or not – there are steps you can take to reduce your chances of developing honeymoon cystitis, triggered by sex.

Dr Bone shares these tips:

- [Practice safer sex.](#)
- Always pee after vaginal sex.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- [Take probiotics.](#)

Further reading

1. [Bono et al: Urinary tract infection.](#)
2. [Li and Leslie: Cystitis.](#)

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Authored by: Amberley Davis	Peer Reviewed by: Dr Krishna Vakharia, MRCGP	
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