

Recurrent Urinary Tract infections (rUTIs)

Recurrent Bacterial Cystitis (RBC)

Where can I obtain advice and support?

Your own doctor, community pharmacist or consultant are all sources of advice and support for RBC sufferers.

If you feel you would like more information on RBC and other bladder health conditions, or would like to find out about support groups in your local area, please contact **Bladder Health UK** on **0121 702 0820**. They can also be found on the internet at www.bladderhealthuk.org

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What is Recurrent Bacterial Cystitis?

Bacterial Cystitis (BC), is a type of Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), with an inflammation of the bladder caused by bacteria entering the bladder via the urethra (the tube through which urine is passed from the bladder).

Bacterial Cystitis/UTI occurs most commonly in women and it is estimated up to 50% of women will get a UTI in their life.¹ Men and children can be affected, although this is less common.

What Causes RBC?

Infection is most often caused by a person's own bowel bacteria that are found on the skin surrounding the anus. These bacteria can be spread to the urinary tract; whilst normally harmless, they can cause isolated and/or recurrent UTIs if they enter the urinary tract. Recurrent infections in women with normally functioning urinary tracts are common. The female urethra is much shorter than that of a male and is closer to the anus. This may go some way to explaining why this condition is more common in women than men. Having sex, pregnancy, menopause, diabetes and bladder or kidney problems can also increase the risk of developing an infection.

Symptoms of Bacterial Cystitis/UTI²

Main symptoms include:

- Burning or stinging pain when urinating (dysuria)
- Frequent need to pass small amounts of urine
- Feeling of urgency to pass urine even when the bladder is empty
- Cloudy/dark urine, which may have a strong smell

Additional symptoms may include:

- Blood in urine (haematuria)
- Mild fever and chills
- Painful sexual intercourse
- Dull pain in the lower back or abdomen
- Fatigue
- Generally feeling unwell
- Nausea

How is it treated?²

Treatment of RBC may involve the use of low dose preventive antibiotics or a course of antibiotics at the time of flare-up. If these are prescribed, it is important to finish the course as directed. Your doctor will discuss and prescribe the most appropriate treatment course for you.

Some patients may benefit from having a product instilled into their bladder in an attempt to re-build the protective lining, which may reduce the recurrence of re-infection.

Can it be prevented?²

Recurrent episodes of cystitis are fairly common and a doctor should always be consulted if cystitis episodes are frequent. If you suffer from RBC, one or more of the following practices may help in preventing another infection:

- Drink plenty of water each day to flush the bladder and urinary tract
- Keep the genital area clean and dry
- Urinate before bed and following intercourse
- To avoid spreading bacteria from the anus to the urethra, always wipe from front toward the rear
- Avoid scented soap on the genital area

1. London Urology Specialists: <https://www.londonurologyspecialists.co.uk/urinary-tract-infection/> (Accessed September 2025)

2. Symptoms of Bacterial Cystitis/UTI: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-tract-infections-utis/>