

9 Bladder/kidney

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Introduction

The two kidneys have a great many functions in the human body. Secretion, absorption and elimination enable them to concentrate or dilute the fluids that pass through them, thus providing for balance in the body's metabolism. Among other things they maintain blood pressure and regulate electrolyte and water metabolism in the body. The kidneys produce urine as part of their eliminatory functions and this passes through the ureters to the bladder where it collects before it is eliminated via the urethra.

Apart from being a metabolic and eliminatory organ, the kidneys also relate to a person's mental state. The system of kidney and bladder reacts quickly and sensitively to shocks and also to physical cold.

Symptoms that can be treated by self medication are largely those of the urinary bladder, mainly irritable bladder and cystitis.

Kidney diseases are not open to self medication. It will always be necessary to see a physician as there is a danger of severe acute and subsequently chronic kidney disease.

9.1 Cystitis

Signs and symptoms

The urinary tract is lined with a mucous membrane. Acute cystitis means that this is inflamed. Symptoms tend to be sudden and severe.

A typical sign for cystitis is a burning sensation when passing urine. This will often be worse towards the end of the process when the irritated and swollen mucous membranes touch as the bladder contracts. Patients also complain of increased and urgent need to urinate; whilst this is more frequent, the actual volume of urine eliminated each time is small. Acute cystitis is often accompanied by pain and mild spasms in the pelvic region which may also extend to the back. The urine may be cloudy and contain mucus and traces of blood.

The condition is in most cases caused by bacteria from the body's own flora migrating through the ureter and multiplying in the bladder. Cystitis must be treated to prevent them reaching the kidneys.

Acute cystitis is a typical female condition, for women are much more often affected than men. This is on the one hand because the female urethra is much shorter and its opening is right next to the vagina and anus. The route for infection is therefore shorter and the danger of smear infection all the greater. Women are also more susceptible to urinary tract infections during hormonal changes such as in pregnancy and climacteric, when the vaginal milieu changes. The warmth organism is of major importance with this condition. The use of heat not only brings relief – lack of warmth in the kidney and bladder region is one of the most common causes of bladder conditions. Many patients will then remember that their feet were cold, they sat on something cold or were generally feeling cold before the condition developed. Cold will also aggravate the existing symptoms.

Self medication may be considered for an ‘acute uncomplicated cystitis’, i.e. the known symptoms are not accompanied by fever, much blood in the urine, intense pain in the kidney region and a distinct feeling of malaise. Many patients are already familiar with the symptoms and in that case self medication makes sense, though it should be limited to a few days.

The aim of treatment is to flush out the bacteria, inhibit the inflammation and relieve the painful irritation. The overweening metabolism in the mucous membrane lining the bladder is restored to normal and the bladder returns to its normal function.

General suggestions for treatment

Children, men, pregnant women, diabetics, immune-suppressed patients and those with indwelling catheters should always consult a physician.

A high temperature and distinct feeling of being ill and weak are not typical of an uncomplicated cystitis. In this case a physician must be consulted.

Symptoms must improve rapidly with self medication (on the first day) and heal up completely; otherwise a physician must be consulted.

Warmth and flushing out the urinary tract are fundamental parts of treatment. It is essential to make sure that buttocks and legs are thoroughly warm by wearing suitable clothing. Cold feet affect the blood supply to kidney and bladder mucosa. To avoid this, wear warm socks (wool).

If you are sensitive to cold in the kidney region it is advisable to wear a woollen kidney warmer during the day. Care of the warmth organism is essential, especially for patients suffering from recurrent cystitis.

It is vital to take sufficient fluids (at least 2 litres a day) regularly to flush out kidneys and urinary tract and so prevent bacteria collecting. Regular visits to the toilet are also part of this.

The action is intensified by drinking kidney and bladder herb teas. The medicinal plants used in them have anti-inflammatory, diuretic, antimicrobial, spasmolytic and/or anti-exudative properties.

- Kidney tea
bearberry leaves
golden rod herb
horsetail

Dosage and method

Combine equal parts.

Pour 200 ml of boiling water on 1 tbsp, leave to stand for 5 – 10 minutes. Take 2 – 5 cups a day.

- Bladder and kidney tea
Birch leaves
lady's mantle herb
golden rod herb
poplar leaves
yarrow flowers

Dosage and method

Combine equal parts.

Pour 200 ml of boiling water on 1 tbsp, leave to stand for 5 – 10 minutes. Take 2 – 5 cups a day.

It is especially if symptoms keep recurring that it is worthwhile to talk to those affected about infection routes. Aspects of hygiene may be discussed (no excessive hygiene of private parts with perfumed products; always wipe from front to back with toilet paper, etc.), and treatment for the patient's partner (exclusion of ping pong effect) may also be considered.

External applications

- Footbath with *Salbei Bad* (Sage Purifying Bath Essence) or *Rosmarin-Aktivierungsbad* (Rosemary Invigorating Bath Milk)/Weleda to stimulate the warmth organism

Dosage and method

Take a hot footbath for about ¼ hour in the evenings, the water temperature still comfortable. Dry feet and legs afterwards and put on warm socks in bed.

Mode of action

Warm feet have a positive effect on the whole warmth organism. Sage and rosemary support the action of the footbath as they also stimulate the warmth organism.

- Mustard footbath
for kidney and bladder diseases
for cold feet and disorders of warmth regulation

Dosage and method

See part II.B section 14 External applications

Mode of action

The oils in *Brassica nigra* (black mustard) dilate the blood vessels, causing hyperaemia and the desired skin irritation. Local hyperthermia of the feet and calves thus activates inflammatory metabolic processes in the bladder and draws them off (derivative action).

- *Kupfersalbe rot* (Red Copper Ointment)/WALA, or
- *Cuprum metallicum praeparatum 0.4% ointment*/Weleda
to support kidney function and provide warmth in cases of cystitis

Dosage and method

Apply to feet and calves

In the evenings apply thinly in a downward direction to the feet (including heels) and calves

Mode of action

The *Cuprum oxydulatum rubrum* (copper(I) oxide) in this ointment acts via the skin on the warmth organism, i.e. the main aim is to bring the warmth which copper radiates to bear. It is subtle and gently but deeply stimulates the blood circulation and breathing-through of tissues in the treated area.

- *Eucalyptus comp. paste*/Weleda
for cystitis

Dosage and method

Apply on ointment dressing once or twice a day. Heat the paste in its closed tube in a water bath for 5 – 20 minutes to soften it. Then apply thickly to a cloth, apply as hot as possible to the bladder region and cover with a cotton cloth (e.g. Molton). Leave for 20 – 30 minutes, removing it sooner if it begins to feel cold. Immediately cover the bladder region to keep it warm.

Mode of action

Apis mellifica (bee) stimulates blood supply and the metabolism, so that self regulation can be restored. Essential oil of eucalyptus (*Eucalypti aetheroleum*) promotes local circulation of blood and lymph. It drains away fluids so that swelling and inflammation go down more rapidly.

Both actions are mediated by *Atropa belladonna* (deadly nightshade) which is able to restore life where there is stasis and also solidification.

- Hot moist bladder compress with eucalyptus oil for cystitis and irritable bladder

Dosage and method

See part II.B section 14 External applications

Mode of action

The compress stimulates warmth and also local blood and lymph circulation. This is due to the essential oil of eucalyptus (*Eucalypti aetheroleum*) which drains away fluids so that swelling and inflammation go down more rapidly. A hot moist compress warms more powerfully to begin with than a hot dry application. The warming action of the oil persists for some time.

Oral medication

- *Cantharis Blasen* (bladder) *pilules/WALA* for acute and subacute inflammation of the urinary tract, e.g. cystitis

Dosage and method

Adults and children aged 6 and over start with 5 – 10 pilules 3 times a day, letting them dissolve under the tongue.

Children up to age 6 take 3 – 5 pilules 1 – 3 times a day

As the condition improves the dose may gradually be reduced.

Mode of action

Cantharis (Spanish fly) reduces any sudden inflammatory irritant changes causing hyperaemia in the mucous membranes.

Equisetum arvense (horsetail) strengthens kidney function and regulates diuresis. *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow) strengthens liver function and thus reduces the tendency to bleed. *Vesica urinaria* (bovine urinary bladder) is an organ preparation with direct stimulant effect on regenerative processes in the bladder.

- *Cantharis D6, dilution/Weleda* for acute and subacute inflammation of the urinary tract, e.g. cystitis

Dosage and method

Adults and children of 6 and over take 5 – 10 drops in some water 1 – 3 times a day.

Young children aged 1 – 5 are given 3 – 5 drops/dose, infants in their first year 2 – 3 drops.

Mode of action

Cantharis (Spanish fly) reduces any sudden inflammatory irritant changes which are causing hyperaemia in the mucous membranes.

- *Berberis/Apis comp. pilules/WALA*
for inflammation in the urinary tract, mouth and nasopharyngeal region, e.g. for irritable bladder, cystitis, stomatitis, sinusitis

Dosage and method

Adults and children of 6 and over: 10 pilules to dissolve under the tongue 1 – 4 times a day, in acute cases 1 or 2-hourly

Mode of action

Berberis e radice (*Berberis vulgaris*, barberry root) has anti-inflammatory and harmonizing actions. *Terebinthina larcina* (larch resin) stimulates the warmth organization and thus overcomes the tendency of mucosal inflammation to become chronic.

Atropa belladonna (deadly nightshade) and *Apis mellifica* (honey bee) overcome inflammation and restore balance to anabolism and catabolism. Local circumscribed foci can thus be reintegrated in the overall regulation of the warmth organism.

- *Argentum/Berberis comp. mixture/Weleda*
for acute and chronic, recurrent inflammations in the urinary tract, e.g. cystitis

Dosage and method

Children of 6 years and over and adults: 15 drops in some water 3 times a day
Infants and children up to 5 years of age: 5 – 10 drops in water 3 times a day.

Mode of action

This product acts especially on inflammation of the bladder's mucous membrane. *Berberis vulgaris* fruits (barberries) have anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and due to their acidity astringent properties. *Silicea* (quartz) structures the mucosa and promotes healing. *Argentum metallicum praeparatum* (precipitated silver vapour) has antibacterial properties and stimulates anabolism. This regenerates the damaged tissues.

- *Thuja comp. N, mixture of triturations* (powders)/Weleda
for acute, subacute and recurrent urinary tract infections.
Particularly suitable for long-term follow-up treatment and prevention of recurrence of chronically recurring cystitis.

Dosage and method

1 – 3 times a day 1 coffee-spoonful (about 0.2 g) to be taken outside mealtimes.

Mode of action

This product influences the milieu in the urinary bladder. With the warmth organization stimulated and resistance increased, pathogens no longer find the nutrients they need.

Argentum metallicum (silver) supports anabolism in the mucosa, has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial actions. Mercurius vivus (mercury) has antibacterial properties and restores the balance of inflammatory reactions. The oils, tannins and resins of *Thuja occidentalis* (arbor vitae) have anti-inflammatory properties and stimulate the warmth organism.

- *Nierentonikum* (kidney tonic) *syrup/WALA*
to stimulate kidney function and flush out the urinary tract
to support treatment for cystitis

Dosage and method

1 tsp of the syrup, undiluted or in a little water, 2–3 times a day.

The tonic is particularly suitable for a course of treatment twice a year, in spring and autumn.

Mode of action

The tonic consists of *Betula pendula* (birch leaves) and *Juniperus communis* (juniper berries).

It stimulates the eliminatory function of the kidneys and thus provides for cleansing and detoxification of the body.

9.2 Irritable bladder

Signs and symptoms

Irritable bladder is not a disease in itself but a set of symptoms which may seriously reduce quality of life. The bladder reacts with hyperactivity, i.e. the muscles in its walls contract even when it is not full. This explains the typical symptoms. The individuals concerned suffer from a frequent urge and have to pass urine many times. The amount passed is, however, minimal. It is often not possible to control the urge (e.g. on sudden effort, sneezing, laughing, etc.) and urine is passed involuntarily.

The causes are many and it is often impossible to establish a definite reason for the symptoms. On the other hand there may be neurogenic disorders, urinary calculi (stones) or the urethra may have narrowed. It is therefore necessary to have a professional medical diagnosis made.

The bladder often stays hypersensitive after cystitis, developing the above symptoms. Hormonal changes during pregnancy or in the climacteric may also give rise to those symptoms. Connective tissue weakness (after giving birth or in old age) may also cause them to be more frequent as the uterus prolapses.

If the cause is reasonably well known, the products listed below will serve well.

General suggestions for treatment

People with an irritable bladder often do not take adequate amounts of fluids. They assume that this will reduce the urge, but the opposite is the case. Too little fluid and therefore a bladder that is not properly filled will gradually reduce bladder capacity. The muscles in the bladder wall weaken and the urine, being more concentrated, causes even more irritation. It is therefore important to ensure adequate fluid intake. Toilet or bladder training is effective and most useful. Going to the toilet regularly at fixed times teaches the bladder to empty in a regular way again. For women it is definitely recommended to do pelvic floor exercises to strengthen the muscles in that area. If symptoms are due to cold and wet conditions, it is advisable to avoid these. Care must be taken that buttocks and legs (including the feet) are kept really warm, using suitable clothing. Wet garments, e.g. after going for a swim, must be changed immediately.

Oral medication

- *Cantharis Blasen* (bladder) *pilules*/WALA
for irritable bladder, above all during and after urinary tract inflammation.

Dosage and method

Adults and children of 6 and over start with 5 – 10 pilules to dissolve under the tongue 3 times a day.

Children under 6 take 3 – 5 pilules 1 – 3 times a day.

The dosage may be gradually reduced as the condition improves.

Mode of action

Cantharis (Spanish fly) reduces any sudden inflammatory irritant changes that are causing hyperaemia in the mucous membranes.

Equisetum arvense (horsetail) strengthens kidney function and regulates diuresis. Achillea millefolium (yarrow) strengthens liver function and thus reduces the tendency to bleed. Vesica urinaria (bovine urinary bladder) is an organ preparation with direct stimulant effect on regenerative processes in the bladder.

- *Senecio comp. pilules*/WALA
- *Senecio comp. suppositories*/WALA
to strengthen connective tissue and smooth muscles if there are irritable bladder symptoms. Connective tissue weakness and symptoms of prolapse.

Dosage and method

Pilules: 5 – 10 to dissolve under the tongue 1 – 3 times a day

Suppositories: Introduce 1 suppository into the rectum 3 times a week to once a day

Mode of action

These products serve to vitalize and tone connective tissue and smooth muscle in the pelvis.

Senecio jacobaea (common ragwort) tautens connective tissues in the pelvis. Olivenite (natural copper arsenite) warms the pelvic region, and Stannum metallicum (metallic tin) strengthens connective tissues. Spinacia oleracea (spinach root) stimulates configuring powers in the pelvis.

- *Berberis/Hypericum comp. pilules/WALA*
for bladder weakness and leucorrhoea

Dosage and method

10 pilules to dissolve under the tongue 2 – 4 times a day

Mode of action

Berberis e radice (*Berberis vulgaris*, barberry root) has anti-inflammatory and harmonizing actions and regulates tone. *Kalium phosphoricum* (potassium dihydrogen phosphate) vitalizes the fluid processes in the pelvic organs, and *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's wort) regulates the emptying of the bladder.