Dear Alice,

I have a burning sensation when I pee. Is this bad?

Signed,
Burning

Answer

Dear Burning,

Painful peeing is bad in the sense that you're experiencing discomfort or pain; however, the good news is that cause is most likely easy to treat. For women and men, burning when you pee is usually a symptom of an infection, like a urinary tract infection (UTI) or a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Symptoms may include:

- Burning when you try to pee
- Needing to pee every few minutes
- Needing to pee with hardly anything coming out
- Some (or a lot of) blood in your pee (pink pee)
- Strong odor to your morning's first pee
- Pain just above your pubic bone

Is this the first time you've had this type of pain? If so, the best bet for quick relief is to visit a health care provider. They will diagnose any infection and give you the proper treatment. These types of infections do need to be treated in a timely manner. If left untreated, the infection can move up into your bladder and may cause serious illness.

Depending on the type of infection, you can use different strategies to prevent future infections. Talking with your partner(s) about safer sex strategies and how to reduce the risk of STIs before getting between the sheets is a good idea. Using condoms and/or other barriers in the future can help prevent the spread of many STIs. Those who suffer from frequent UTIs may be able to prevent the infections that cause burning and related symptoms. Here are a few ideas to keep a UTI at bay:

- Drinking unsweetened cranberry juice (or taking concentrated cranberry pills or powder, often found at health food stores) creates an unsupportive environment in the bladder and urethra for the infection-causing bacteria.
Eliminating or cutting back on caffeine and alcohol, both of which may irritate the bladder and make you more susceptible to infection.

Drinking plenty of water is always a good idea for prevention and is especially useful if you start to feel any symptoms.

If you're sexually active, peeing before and after sex can help flush out infection-causing bacteria before they have a chance to make their home in the urethra.

Finally, it's recommended that females always wipe 'front-to-back' after going to the bathroom, which also helps keep bacteria away from the urethra.

Although you may have burning pee, your cheeks need not burn when you talk to a health care provider; UTIs and STIs are common infections and there is no need to be embarrassed about seeking treatment. Here's hoping you find relief,

Alice!

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