



A.Vogel

Cystitis

How to keep your
urinary tract healthy.



How to get keep your bladder healthy

Hello, I am Emma Ross, nutritionist and A.Vogel's Women's Health Expert.

Cystitis affects many of us to varying degrees and is guaranteed to take the edge off your happiness and vitality. As persistent use of antibiotics is problematic, it is good to know that there are natural ways in which you can boost the health of your urinary tract and reduce the likelihood of infections.

I hope that this booklet helps you to better urinary tract health. Please do contact me if you would like advice on your specific situation, and I will be happy to help.

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How to keep your urinary tract healthy

That first warning twinge that tells you your urinary tract isn't happy is dreaded by millions of women (and some men) who suffer cystitis on a regular basis.

Inflammation of the bladder, whether accompanied by infection or not, is a painful affair. It sends you speeding towards the loo, propelled by an urgent need to pee, but makes urination extremely uncomfortable. You fear to drink, unwilling to pass more water, but dehydration actually makes the situation worse because concentrated urine is extremely irritating to the bladder lining.

CYSTITIS: How to Keep Your Urinary Tract Healthy.

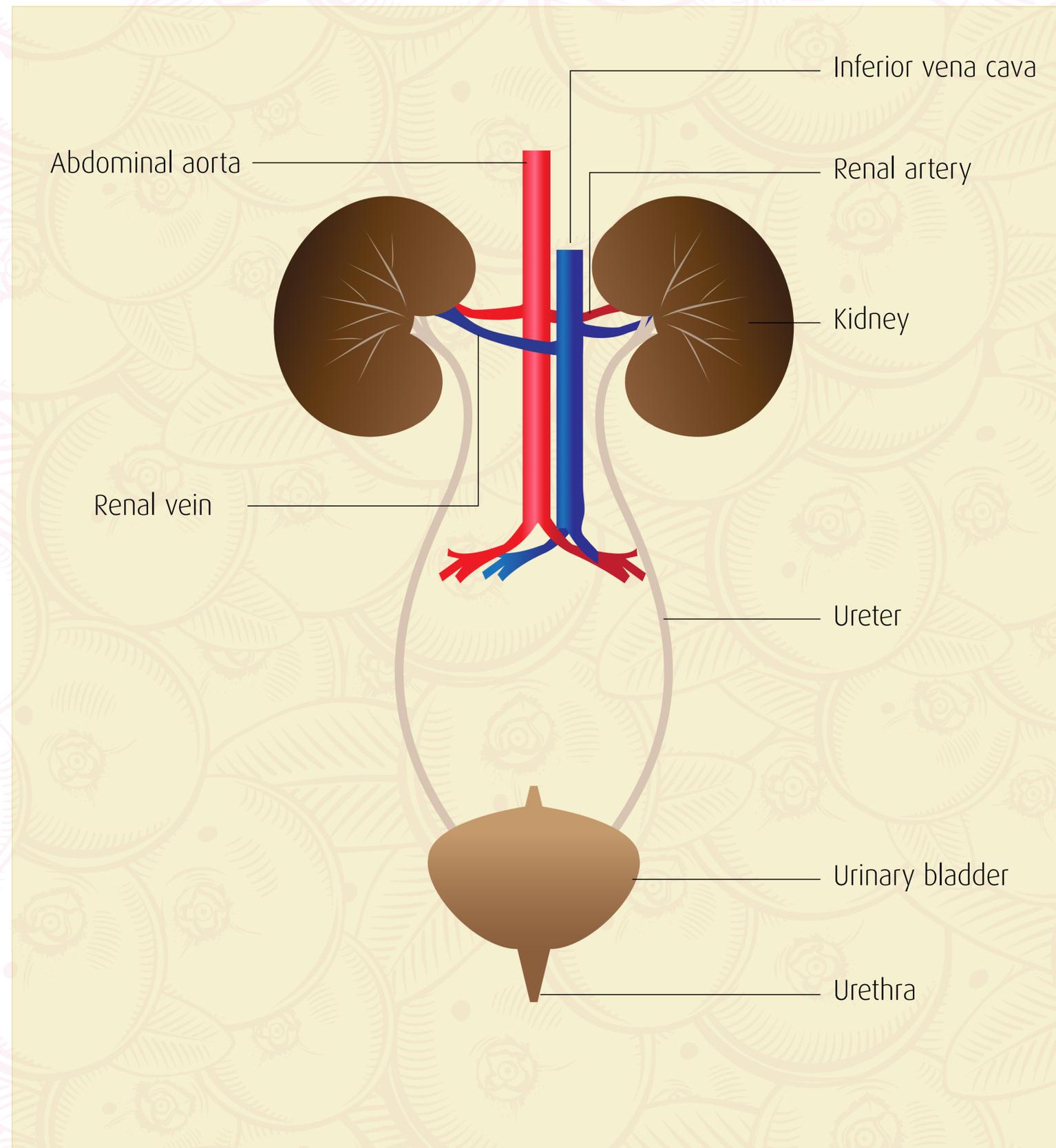
Know your urinary tract facts

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is deemed to be present when the number of bacteria in the urine rises over a certain threshold.

Lower UTIs are situated in the bladder and are known as **cystitis**.

Upper UTIs also involve the kidneys and should therefore always be treated by a doctor.

If symptoms include lower back pain, blood in the urine, or a fever, a doctor must be consulted.





Bacterial infections often start with the bacteria *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) attaching to the bladder wall. This isn't the type of *E. coli* that causes food poisoning, but one that lives in small amounts in the intestinal tract. If it reaches the urinary tract it can cause infections, and this happens fairly easily in women because the distance from the anus to the urinary tract opening is short. One of the reasons men get fewer UTIs than women is that it's harder for bacteria to travel all the way from the anus to the end of the penis. Another reason is that the distance from the urinary tract opening to the bladder is shorter in women.

The troublemakers

Bacterial cystitis involves an infection and the symptoms include:

-Pain on passing urine—burning or scalding pain.....
-Frequency of passing urine.....
-Feeling that you need to pass urine even when the bladder is empty.....
-Cloudy urine.....
-Pain in the groin.....

It's easier for bacteria to get a grip on the bladder if urine is concentrated, which happens when you **don't drink enough water**. Ordinary tea and coffee and fizzy drinks don't help to dilute the urine, but do have a negative impact on the pH of urine in the bladder if taken in large quantities.



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The pH of urine in the bladder should be slightly acid in the morning (pH = 6.5–7.0), generally becoming more alkaline (pH = 7.5–8.0) by the evening. This pH plays a part in keeping urine free of infection by inhibiting the growth of bacteria. Caffeinated drinks, refined sugar, highly processed foods and red meat can all contribute to imbalancing the pH of your urine and making you more susceptible to infections.

Tip: Don't worry about citrus fruit, which is not bad for your bladder if taken in moderate amounts, free of added sweeteners.

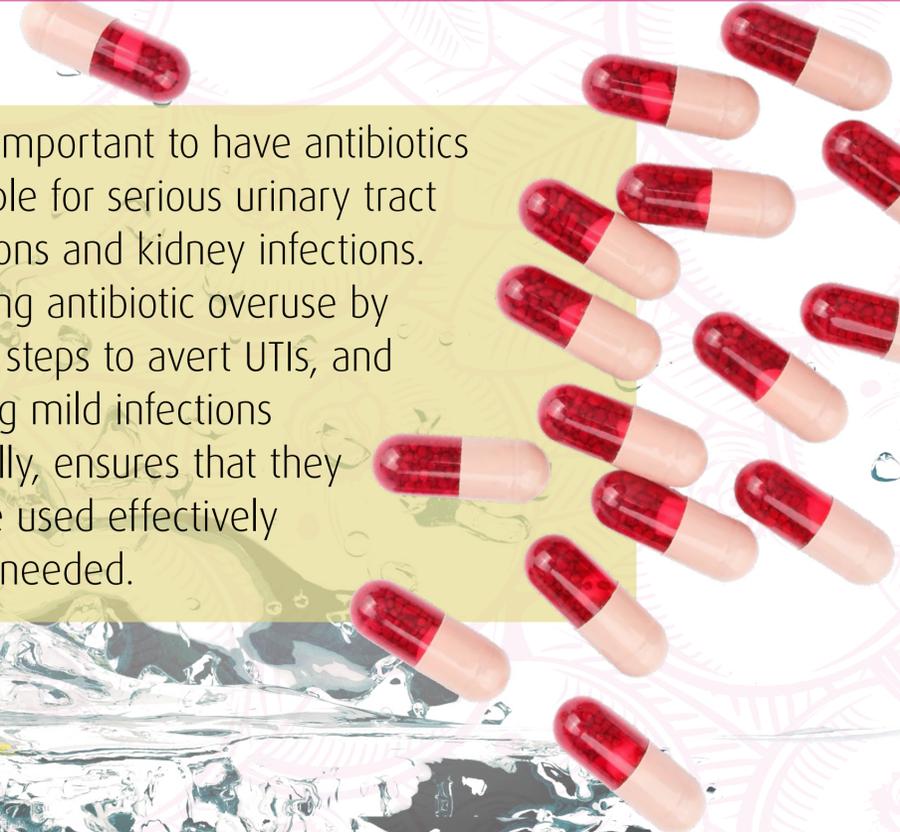


The immune system also plays a part in controlling the growth of bacteria, both in the gut and the urinary tract. Poor immune function makes you more prone to infections, and recurrent infections weaken immune function and make the bladder lining more susceptible to further infections – a nasty vicious circle.

The antibiotic issue

E. coli may become resistant to antibiotics if they are continually used to counter UTIs. In addition, repeated doses of antibiotics are unhelpful for immune function. Many women find that they get thrush when taking antibiotics, adding additional discomfort to the problem of cystitis.

It's important to have antibiotics available for serious urinary tract infections and kidney infections. Avoiding antibiotic overuse by taking steps to avert UTIs, and treating mild infections naturally, ensures that they can be used effectively when needed.



What you should do

How to minimise the risk of infections

Drink at least 1.5 litres of still, plain water daily

Reduce the amount of coffee, tea and fizzy drinks that you take

Reduce the amount of refined sugar and highly processed food that you eat

Be gentle when inserting tampons so that you don't damage nearby tissue

Empty your bladder after having sex

Wipe from front to back after using the toilet

Don't resist the urge to urinate—always go when you need to

Avoid tight trousers and non-cotton underwear

When entering the menopause, be aware that the membranes lining the bladder and vagina may become thinner, so more precautions are necessary to avoid infections

Staying hydrated

Help your urinary tract to stay healthy by drinking plenty of plain, still water, to which you can add a touch of bicarbonate of soda, or a squeeze of lemon or lime, to make it more alkalinising.

Check out the ranges of herbal teas and coffee alternatives in health stores, to replace your ordinary tea and coffee. There are so many options these days; it's a pleasure to experiment with the different tastes available.



Berry good

Fresh **cranberries** are an excellent source of vitamin C, and they also contain D-mannose, a constituent that is thought to help to prevent unfriendly bacteria from sticking to the wall of the bladder and causing infections. **Cranberries** are therefore a popular choice for maintaining a healthy bladder.

As fresh **cranberries** are extremely sour they are often taken in the form of an extract or powder, to avoid the need for added sweeteners.

A Cochrane report concluded that **cranberry** was as effective as antibiotic use in preventing urinary tract infections, whilst obviously not attended by the problems of long-term antibiotic use.⁽¹⁾

Specifications



Cranberry can be taken daily by people prone to UTIs

There are no restrictions on duration of use

Cranberry is not known to interact with antibiotics

Cranberry is suitable for use alongside Uva-ursi



Berry better

Nature also provides a remedy for countering urinary tract infections that have already taken hold. The herb **Uva-ursi** (Bearberry) has a remarkable effect on the bladder, possessing the ability to work specifically in the bladder rather than anywhere else in the body.

Uva ursi travels through the body, remaining inert until it reaches the bladder. There it changes its chemical structure, being hydrolysed to produce a substance called hydroquinone that disinfects the bladder. This disinfecting action is not associated with any side effects and it does not cause thrush.

Uva-ursi can be expected to help bring relief from an attack of cystitis within 12-24 hours. It can also be used alongside cranberry-based products if an infection seems likely — if you know an infection is lurking and have time to take preventative action. The differentiating factor between the two remedies is that Uva-ursi can disinfect the bladder, which cranberry cannot do.

Taken long-term, **Uva-ursi's** astringent action is thought to strengthen the membranes within the urinary tract whilst its antiseptic action guards against infection.

If symptoms do not improve within 48 hours, medical attention should be sought.



Specifications

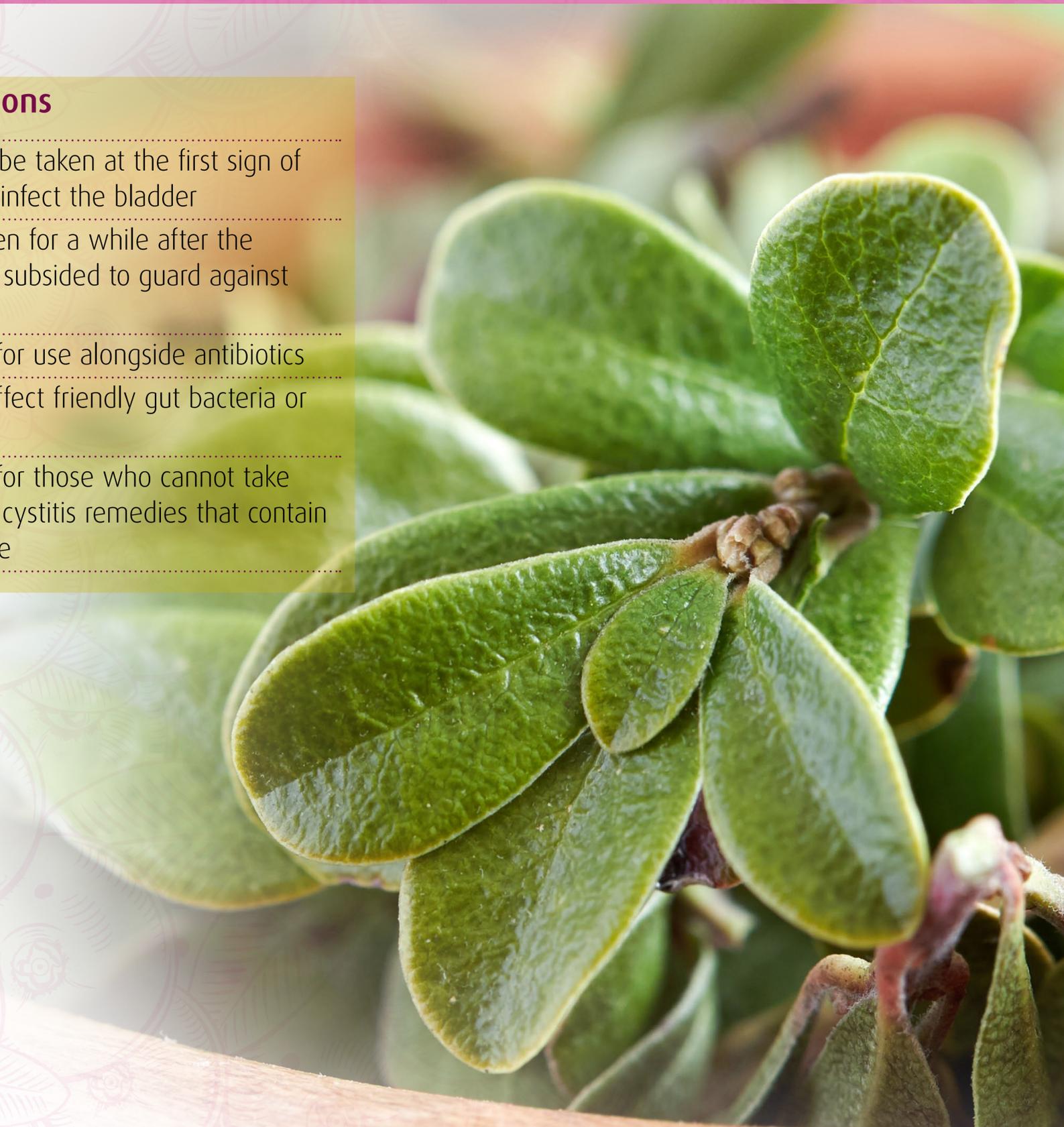
Uva-ursi can be taken at the first sign of trouble to disinfect the bladder

It can be taken for a while after the infection has subsided to guard against reinfection

It is suitable for use alongside antibiotics

It does not affect friendly gut bacteria or cause thrush

It is suitable for those who cannot take conventional cystitis remedies that contain sodium citrate



How to use herbal remedies safely

This guide is not intended to replace medical advice. You should consult a healthcare professional if you have any condition which is of concern. For safe, effective results when taking herbal remedies, follow these guidelines.

- If the product you have has an in-pack leaflet then you should follow the instructions and advice on the leaflet and product packaging.
- If the product does not come with an in-pack leaflet then you should follow the instructions and advice on the product packaging. The following general advice also applies to products with no in-pack leaflet.
- If there is any doubt as to the nature of the problem please consult your doctor for a diagnosis.
- Do not use when pregnant or breastfeeding unless under the supervision of a healthcare professional.
- Do not use for children under 2 years of age unless under the supervision of a healthcare professional.
- Do not exceed stated doses.
- Do not use alongside medication with the same action eg. a tranquillizing herb alongside tranquillizing medication.
- Do not take more than 3 herbal remedies concurrently.
- Stop taking herbal remedies 14 days before surgery.