Intermountain® Healthcare

# Cystoscopy

## What is it?

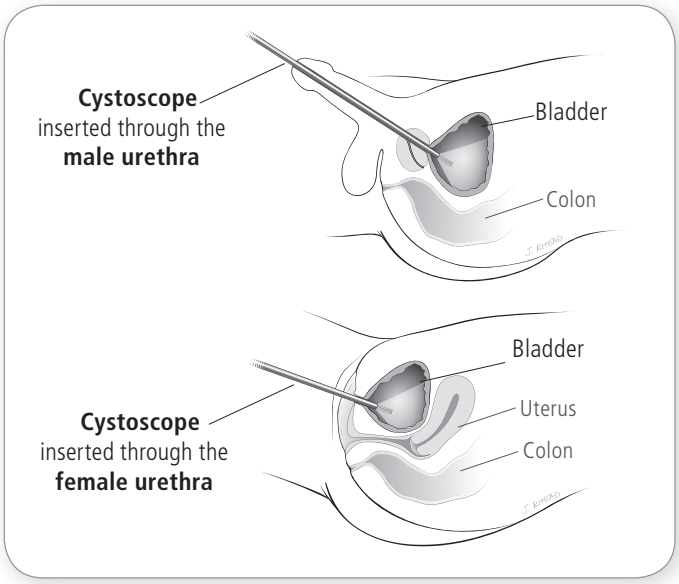
**Cystoscopy** is a procedure that allows your doctor to look closely at the inside of your bladder and urethra. With cystoscopy, your doctor can see areas of your bladder and urethra that don't usually show up on x-rays.

Cystoscopy is performed with a **cystoscope**, a long, thin tube with a light and camera at the end. Tiny tools attached to the cystoscope can be used to remove bladder stones, small growths, or samples of tissue or urine.

## Why do I need it?

Your doctor may recommend cystoscopy for one of the following reasons:

- **To find the cause of urinary problems,** such as repeated urinary tract infections, trouble urinating, pain during urination, unexplained blood in the urine, or urinary incontinence.
- **To look for problems in the urethra,** such as blockage caused by bladder stones (small masses of mineral), or extra tissue growth.
- **To check for signs of disease,** such as kidney disease or cancer of the bladder or urethra.
- **To look for unusual anatomy** that may be causing problems.




## How do I prepare?

Before you go in for the procedure, be sure to:

- Make plans for someone to take you home afterwards.
- Talk with someone at the hospital or surgical center about any special instructions they have for you.
- Tell your doctor if you are allergic to any medications, including anesthesia medication.

## Talking with your doctor

Before your cystoscopy, your doctor will meet with you to describe the procedure. You will discuss the benefits, risks, and alternatives. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your discussion with your doctor is the most important part of learning about what to expect.

| Potential benefits | Risks and potential complications | Alternatives |
|---|---|---|
| • Identify the cause of symptoms<br>• May prevent the need for surgery | • Infection in the urinary tract that, rarely, spreads to other areas of the body<br>• Puncture of the urethra or bladder (very rare)<br>• Risks associated with general anesthesia, including allergy to medication, breathing problems, nausea, and vomiting | Cystoscopy is the best way for your doctor to see inside your bladder and urethra. The alternative, an x-ray, is less effective. |

## What happens during the procedure?

The procedure will last between 10 and 30 minutes. Here's what you can expect:

- **Anesthesia.** You may be given general anesthesia that makes you sleep and prevents feeling in your entire body. Or, you may be given a local anesthesia that prevents feeling only in the area of the procedure. With local anesthesia, you may also be given another medication to make you sleepy.
- **Cystoscope.** A cystoscope will be inserted into your urethra and slowly advanced to your bladder. This may be a little uncomfortable.
- **Water.** Through the cystoscope, your bladder will be filled with water. The water stretches the bladder wall and allows the doctor to see it better. It will also make you feel the need to urinate. It's important that your bladder stay full during the procedure, though.
- **Observation and procedures.** Your doctor will look closely at your bladder and urethra. If any tissues appear abnormal, your doctor may take samples for testing. You may feel a quick pinch.

## What happens after the procedure?

- You will be taken to a recovery area where you will be monitored until the anesthesia wears off.
- You may feel as if you have to urinate, even if your bladder is empty.
- Your urine may appear red or pink for a day or two.
- You may need to urinate more often for the first few days, and it may sting at first.
- The urethra may feel sore for a few days.

## How do I care for myself at home?

- **Manage pain.** Your doctor may recommend pain medication for the first few days. Be sure to take it as directed. You may also feel better if you:
  - Hold a warm, wet washcloth over your urethra
  - Take a warm bath, if your doctor says it's okay
- **Drink plenty of water**. Be sure to drink at least 4 to 6 glasses of water per day.
- **Eat your normal diet and return to normal activity** as soon as you feel comfortable.
- **Take medications as prescribed.** You may be given antibiotic medication to prevent infection after surgery. You may also be given other medication to treat problems discovered during the procedure.

## Straining urine

In some people, a cystoscopy shows that they have "stones" in their bladder. These are small masses of minerals that form in concentrated urine. If your cystoscopy showed that you have bladder stones, you may be asked to strain your urine. Ask your doctor how many days you should strain your urine. Follow these steps:

- Your doctor may have given you a strainer. If you don't have a strainer, you can use a coffee filter.
- Urinate directly into the strainer or filter. Or, you can urinate into a cup, and then pour the urine through the strainer. Save anything that does not pass through it. Stones may be tiny, like sand, or larger, like gravel.
- Allow the stones to dry and store them in a plastic or glass container. Take them to your doctor at your next visit.

## When will I get the results?

In some cases your doctor may be able to discuss the findings of your cystoscopy right away. If you doctor took a tissue sample or removed any other material, though, it may be sent to a lab for evaluation. You may need to make a follow-up appointment to discuss the results. Write the date and time of your follow-up appointment here:_____

## When should I contact my doctor?

Contact your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Blood or blood clots in your urine after you have urinated several times
- You have not been able to urinate for 8 hours after the procedure
- Fever, chills, or severe pain in your abdomen
- Less urine than normal

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