

The Vagina

It is normal for a small amount of fluid or discharge that is clear or cloudy white to pass from the vagina. This normal vaginal discharge changes throughout the month. Discharge keeps the tissue moist and healthy and is a natural cleanser. The vagina holds organisms, such as bacteria and yeast, in balance so it can function normally. If this normal balance is upset, either yeast or bacteria can overgrow and cause vaginitis.

What is Vaginitis?

- Inflammation of the vagina and/or abnormal vaginal discharge
- A disruption of normal flora of the vagina
- Bacterial Vaginosis and Yeast.

What can cause vaginitis?

Factors that can change the balance of yeast and bacteria that normally live in the vagina are:

- Using antibiotics
- Douching
- Sexual intercourse
- Spermicides
- Changes in hormone levels due to pregnancy, breastfeeding or menopause
- Infections caused by bacteria such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhea or by Trichomoniasis.

	Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) (most common specific cause of vaginitis).	Candidiasis (monilia, yeast) (75% of all women will experience one episode in their lifetime)
What causes Vaginitis?	An overgrowth of Gardnerella Vaginalis (normally occurring bacteria) within the vagina.	Candida, which is a normal vaginal flora, overgrows and causes symptoms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidiasis is not usually sexually transmitted
What are the symptoms?	Vaginal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White or gray vaginal discharge • Unpleasant vaginal odour that is "fishy" sometimes more noticeable during period or after sex • Pain when passing urine • Pain or burning during intercourse Many individuals may experience no symptoms!	Vaginal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, thick "cottage cheese-like" vaginal discharge • Mild to severe vaginal redness, swelling, itching and burning • Pain with intercourse Often no symptoms!
	Penile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms of bacterial vaginosis rare 	Penile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritation, redness and itching on genitals or under the foreskin, • Pain when passing urine
How Is vaginitis diagnosed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swabs are taken from the vagina and examined under a microscope. • Yeast may show up on a routine PAP test. • Over-the-counter testing kits and treatments are available, but are not recommended. 50% of individuals misdiagnose themselves. See your doctor or healthcare provider • Penile swabs are not usually taken for B.V. or yeast 	
		OVER



	Bacterial Vaginosis	Yeast
How is vaginitis treated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often only people with symptoms are treated. • Usually treated with a prescription pill such as Flagyl/Metronidazole. • Alcohol should be avoided during and for 48 hours after finishing treatment. • Avoid intercourse during treatment. <p>If penile symptoms are present seek a health care provider, as treatment is rare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovules, pills, suppositories and creams can be purchased without a prescription at a pharmacy. • Pills are not recommended during pregnancy or when breastfeeding. • Intercourse should be avoided during treatment. • A physician should see you the first time you have symptoms to rule out more serious STIs. <p>If penile symptoms are present, individuals can use the creams as well.</p>
Is follow-up testing necessary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up if pregnant or if symptoms come back. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up if symptoms come back or worsen after treatment • If a person has recurrent yeast infections, they should be examined for underlying health conditions.

How do I keep my vagina healthy?

- Eat balanced meals and try to stay away from foods high in sugar, yeast or chocolate.
- Be aware that the use of antibiotics or other medications may put you at an increased risk of vaginitis.
- Always wipe from front to back after going to the bathroom.
- Avoid bubble baths, or shampooing your hair in the tub.
- Avoid douches, feminine sprays, and perfumed talcum powders, wipes and soaps.
- Avoid perfumed tampons and pads.
- Ensure that you do not leave tampons inside the vagina for longer than the recommended time.
- Wear cotton underpants and loose fitting pants. Avoid tight jeans, bathing suits and pantyhose which hold moisture in the genital area.
- Avoid repeated use of spermicides.
- Use only water-based lubricants and be sure that you have enough lubricant during sexual intercourse or contact
- Clean sex toys thoroughly after use and do not share with others.
- Always urinate after intercourse and wash vulva with water or a mild soap.
- Avoid multiple partners.
- Use condoms from start to finish every time you have sexual contact. BV is sexually associated and the risk of BV and repeated infections increase when intercourse occurs without the use of condoms.
- If you suspect that condoms are irritating you-discuss alternatives with your health care provider.

Complications

Vaginitis can increase a person's risk of getting Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), if exposed. BV may lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, possible miscarriage and postpartum infection. It is important to follow up with your health care provider if symptoms continue or worsen.

Sources:

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006). Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections.

www.publichealth.gc.ca/sti

American Academy of Family Physicians. (2010). Vaginal Discharge: Changes that may be signs of a problem

<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/women/reproductive/vaginal/194.html>

www.sexualityandu.ca

www.womenshealthmatters.ca

For more information please contact The Clinic at 519-663-5317

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