

How to Manage Symptoms of Vaginal Infection

Vaginitis is an inflammation of a woman's vagina. At least one-third of women will have symptoms of vaginitis at some point during their lives. Vaginitis affects women of all ages but is most common during the reproductive years. There are many possible causes, and the type of treatment depends on the cause.

The Vagina

It is normal for a small amount of clear or cloudy white fluid to pass from a woman's vagina. This keeps the tissue moist and healthy. The vagina holds organisms, such as bacteria and yeast, in balance so it can function normally.

A change in the normal balance can allow either yeast or bacteria to increase and result in vaginitis. This causes the lining of the vagina to become inflamed. Vaginitis may cause itching, a bad odor, or a large amount of discharge.

Diagnosis

To diagnose vaginitis, your doctor will take a sample of the discharge from your vagina and look at it under a microscope. Your doctor also may suggest other laboratory tests.

To ensure the test results are accurate, do not douche or use any vaginal medications or spermicide before you see your doctor.

Treatment

Treatment will depend on the cause of the vaginitis. Treatment may be either with either an oral treatment or with a cream or gel that is applied to the vagina.

It is important to follow your doctor's instructions exactly, even if the discharge or other symptoms go away before you finish treatment. Even though the symptoms disappear, the infection could still be present. Stopping the treatment early may cause symptoms to return.

If symptoms recur after treatment is finished, see your doctor. A different treatment may be needed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Here's how you can lower the risk of getting vaginitis:

- Do not use feminine hygiene sprays or scented deodorant tampons.
- Do not try to cover up a bad odor. It could be a sign of infection that should prompt you to see a doctor.
- Do not douche. It is better to let the vagina cleanse itself.
- Thoroughly clean diaphragms, cervical caps, and spermicide applicators after each use.
- Use condoms during sex.

THE NATURAL WAY

In order to prevent vaginal infections, keeping the natural balance of the vaginal infection can help.

Dietary changes. Minimizing simple carbohydrates and concentrated sweets (such as cookies, candy, etc) can help prevent vaginal infections, particularly those caused by yeast.

Dietary supplements. Adding *probiotics* to your daily regimen can help maintain a healthy vaginal environment. These are the "good" bacteria needed by your body. Lactobacilli are the healthy bacteria that help keep the vaginal environment in balance. We recommend **nutraMetrix Digestive Enzymes with Probiotics* (liquid) or *Probiotics* (tablet).

Vitamin D deficiency has also been linked to an increase in both yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis. Maintaining adequate levels may decrease these infections. We recommend **nutraMetrix Isotonix Vitamin D with K2*.

Maintaining normal blood glucose levels can also help vaginal balance. Yeast may flourish in a high sugar environment. We recommend **nutraMetrix Blood Sugar Maintenance* as a natural approach to normalizing blood sugar levels.

**nutraMetrix offers a full line of isotonic vitamins and supplements. They come in powdered form and are mixed with water. As a liquid they are absorbed within 5-10 minutes. For more information about the vitamin and dietary supplements mentioned above, go to www.nutraMetrix.com/DunneDeLashoMDs*

YEAST INFECTION

Yeast infection also is known as candidiasis. It is one of the most common types of vaginal infection.

Cause. Vaginal yeast infections are caused by a fungus called *Candida*. It is found in small numbers in the normal vagina. However, when the balance of bacteria and yeast in the vagina is altered, the yeast may overgrow and cause symptoms.

Some types of antibiotics increase your risk of a yeast infection. The antibiotics kill normal vaginal bacteria, which keep yeast in check. The yeast can then overgrow.

A woman is more likely to get yeast infections if she is pregnant or has diabetes. Overgrowth of yeast also can occur if the body's immune system, which protects the body from disease, is not working well. For example, in women infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), yeast infections may be severe. They may not go away, even with treatment, or may recur often. In many cases, the cause of a yeast infection is not known.

Symptoms. The most common symptoms of a **YEAST INFECTION** are *itching and burning* of the area outside the vagina called the *vulva*. The burning may be worse with urination or sex. The vulva may be red and swollen. The vaginal discharge usually is *white, lumpy, and has no odor*. Some women with yeast infections notice an increase or change in discharge. Others do not notice a discharge at all.

Treatment. Yeast infections can be treated either by placing medication into the vagina or by taking a pill. Treatment of male sex partners is not necessary. You can buy over-the-counter yeast medication, but be sure to see your doctor if:

- This is the first time you have had a vaginal infection
- Your symptoms do not go away after treatment
- Your vaginal discharge is yellow or green or has a bad odor
- There is a chance that you have a *sexually transmitted disease (STD)*

Sometimes a woman thinks she has a yeast infection when she actually has another problem. There are several conditions that cause itching and burning, just like yeast. If there is another cause, it may be harder to find if a woman is taking medications for a yeast infection.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

Cause. The bacteria that cause bacterial vaginosis occur naturally in the vagina. Bacterial vaginosis is caused by overgrowth of these bacteria. *It is not a sexually acquired infection.* However, symptoms may worsen with sex. Usually there is no need to treat a woman's sexual partner. But if the woman has repeated infections, her doctor might decide to treat her partner.

Symptoms. The main symptom of **BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS** is increased discharge with a strong fishy odor. The odor may be stronger during your menstrual period or after sex. The discharge usually is thin and dark or dull gray, but may have a greenish color. Itching is not common, but may be present if there is a lot of discharge.

Treatment. Several different antibiotics can be used to treat bacterial vaginosis, but there are two that are most commonly used: metronidazole (*Flagyl*) and clindamycin. They can be taken by mouth or inserted into the vagina as a cream or gel. A new more convenient regimen is used with a medication called *Tindamax*. Do not drink alcohol when taking metronidazole or Tindamax, as this combination may cause severe nausea and vomiting.

Bacterial vaginosis often recurs. It may require long-term or repeated treatment. In most cases, treatment works in time. Sometimes when bacterial vaginosis keeps coming back it may mean that you have an STD. Your doctor may test you for other infections.

TRICHOMONIASIS

Cause. Trichomoniasis is caused by the microscopic parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*. It is sexually transmitted.

Symptoms. Signs of trichomoniasis may include a yellow-gray or green vaginal discharge often with a fishy odor. There may be burning, irritation, redness, and swelling of the vulva. Sometime there is pain during urination.

Treatment. Trichomoniasis is usually treated with a single dose of metronidazole or Tindamax by mouth. A woman and her partner both need to be treated.