

Many women will have a vaginal infection at some time in their lives. The information presented here is designed to allow you to:

- Identify when you may have an infection.
- Minimize factors which may contribute to vaginitis.
- Give specific suggestions to try at home to treat what seems to be a common vaginal infection.

Is Vaginal Discharge Normal?

YES. Every woman has a clear secretion produced by glands in the cervix. In the vagina this secretion joins with discarded cells from the walls of the vagina, becoming whitish and cloudy. This type of discharge is normal. It does not need any special treatment other than bathing and personal cleanliness. Douches and medications are not necessary; in fact, they may be harmful if used to try to “cure” a normal discharge. A normal discharge has some odor but causes no irritation. Every woman has some vaginal discharge and there is often more at the time of ovulation and just before a period.

When is Discharge Abnormal?

Any of the following may indicate vaginitis:

- Itching
- Unusual odor
- Increased amount of discharge
- Blood-tinged discharge
- Irritation

The Following Factors may Increase the Chance of Developing Vaginitis:

- Stress or nervousness
- IUDs
- Birth control pills
- Poor eating habits
- Perfumed hygiene products, such as bubble baths, tampons, pads, toilet paper, flavored lubricants
- Lubricants that contain the ingredients glycerin and/or parabens
- Antibiotics
- Diabetes
- Pregnancy
- Decreased lubrication during intercourse

Some Ways to Reduce Chances of Getting Vaginitis:

- Wear cotton underwear to reduce heat and moisture.
- Wear clothes that fit loosely in the crotch.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Avoid routine douching, which can dilute the body’s protective bacteria.
- Avoid the chemicals in products such as deodorant tampons/pads, scented or colored toilet paper, commercial douches and bubble baths, soaps and feminine deodorant sprays.
- Limit foods high in sugar.
- Develop techniques to minimize stress and tension.
- Get adequate rest and nutrition.
- Use additional lubrication, if needed, during intercourse (not Vaseline).
- Have your partner wear a condom if you are unsure as to whether or not he may currently have been exposed to an infection.

A Check-Up by a Clinician is indicated if:

- You think you may have a urinary tract infection.
- You have abdominal pain or a fever.
- Vaginal infection symptoms persist for more than two (2) to three (3) days.
- You are pregnant.