

What is Vaginitis?

Vaginitis is an inflammation or infection of the vagina that causes itching, burning, irritation, odor, and discharge. Your doctor can tell if you have it by examining you and doing some tests.

The most common causes of vaginitis are: **bacterial vaginosis, vulvovaginal candidiasis (yeast), and trichomoniasis.**

Bacterial vaginosis

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common cause of abnormal vaginal discharge in reproductive-age females however, it can affect women of all ages.

CAUSES

Bacterial vaginosis is a type of inflammation caused by overgrowth of bacteria naturally found in the vagina which upsets the natural balance. The cause is not completely understood but certain activities like unprotected intercourse or frequent douching can increase your risk.

RISK FACTORS

You have higher chances of developing bacterial vaginosis through the following:

- Sexual Activity - Although it is NOT a sexually transmitted disease (STD), there is a link between sexual activity and BV that doctors do not fully understand. However, having multiple sex partners or new a sex partner independent of gender increases your risk.
- Douching - The practice of rinsing out your vagina with water or cleansing agents upsets its natural balance. This can lead to an overgrowth of bad bacteria leading to BV.
- Natural lack of lactobacilli bacteria - If your vaginal environment does not produce enough lactobacilli bacteria you are more likely to develop BV.

SYMPTOMS

Many women with BV present with no symptoms. However, if symptoms develop they can include:

- Fishy odor that typically gets stronger after intercourse
- Itching and irritation
- Thin, white/gray/or green watery discharge

TESTS & TREATMENT

During a pelvic exam the doctor will visually inspect for signs of infection and collect a sample of vaginal secretions.

There are several ways to treat bacterial vaginosis. Your doctor will prescribe one of the following medications:

- Metronidazole. It can be prescribed as a pill by mouth or a vaginal gel.
- Clindamycin. This medication can be prescribed as a vaginal cream. This can weaken latex condoms during treatment for at least 3 days after you stop medication.
- Tinidazole. It is available as a pill that can be taken orally.
- Secnidazole. It is available as a pill that can be taken orally.

It is generally not recommended to treat an infected woman's male sexual partner but BV can spread between female sexual partners.

Yeast infection

Vulvovaginal yeast infection is an infection that causes itching and irritation of the vulva, the outer lips of the vagina. This type of infection is usually caused by a fungus called candida. This may cause thick, white discharge that can look like cottage cheese, and an itching, burning, and/or redness of the vagina.

CAUSES

The fungus that causes yeast infections normally lives in the vagina and the gut. Even though the yeast are there, they do not usually cause symptoms. Certain medicines (especially antibiotics), stress, and other factors can cause the fungus to grow more than it should. When that happens, a yeast infection can start.

RISK FACTORS

Factors that increase your risk of developing a yeast infection include:

- *Antibiotic use* - Yeast infections are common in women who take antibiotics. Broad-spectrum antibiotics, which kill a range of bacteria, also kill healthy bacteria in your vagina, leading to overgrowth of yeast.
- *Increased estrogen levels* - Yeast infections are more common in women with higher estrogen levels — such as pregnant women or women taking high-dose estrogen birth control pills or estrogen hormone therapy.
- *Uncontrolled diabetes* - Women with poorly controlled blood sugar are at greater risk of yeast infections than women with well-controlled blood sugar.
- *Impaired immune system* - Women with lowered immunity — such as from corticosteroid therapy or HIV infection — are more likely to get yeast infections.

SYMPTOMS

- Itching is the most common symptom of a vaginal yeast infection
- Pain with urination
- Soreness, irritation, swelling of the vulva and vagina
- Pain with intercourse
- If discharge is present it is typically white and clumpy (curd-like) or thin and watery

TESTS AND TREATMENTS

The best way to find out if you have a yeast infection is to see your doctor or nurse. He or she can run a swab (Q-tip) inside your vagina to collect vaginal fluids. Then, he or she can look at the vaginal fluids from the swab under a microscope and look for the fungus that causes yeast infections. Sometimes a test is done to find out which type of yeast you have.

Depending on your situation, your doctor or nurse might do other tests on your vaginal fluid, too. One common test checks for yeast infections as well as bacterial vaginosis and trichomoniasis. These are other infections that can also cause itching and irritation.

Yeast infections can be treated with a pill that you swallow or with medicines that you put in the vagina and on the vulva. The medicines that you put in the vagina come in creams, tablets

and suppositories. All medicines for yeast infections work by killing the fungus that causes the infections.

Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis is an infection that you can get during sex. Infections that are spread during sex are called “sexually transmitted infections,” or “STIs.” Both women and men can get trichomoniasis.

CAUSES

Trichomoniasis is caused by a tiny parasite called *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The most common symptom is a frothy green or yellow discharge with or without pain.

RISK FACTORS

- Multiple sexual partners
- A history of other sexually transmitted infections
- A previous episode of trichomoniasis
- Sex without a condom

SYMPTOMS

Although symptoms of the disease vary, most people who have the parasite cannot tell they are infected. When symptoms do occur they often include:

- Itching, burning, redness or soreness of the genitals;
- Discomfort with urination
- A change in their vaginal discharge (i.e., thin discharge or increased volume) that can be clear, white, yellowish, or greenish with an unusual fishy smell

In men, the symptoms of the infection include:

- Itching or irritation inside the penis
- Burning after urination or ejaculation or pain during urination
- Discharge from the penis

TESTS AND TREATMENTS

Trichomoniasis is treated with medicine that comes in pills. There are 2 prescription medicines for trichomoniasis - Metronidazole or Tinidazole. If you are a woman, your doctor or nurse will test you again after you're done taking the medicine to make sure that you haven't been infected again. The repeat test is done between 4 and 6 weeks after completing the medication course.

Still have questions?

CONTACT US TODAY AT **212-988-2111**
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