

Vaginal Infections

What are vaginal infections?

- Vaginal infections are a common reason for a woman to see her doctor.
- Vaginal infections are caused by microorganisms. The three most common vaginal infections are:
 - yeast;
 - bacterial vaginosis (BV);
 - trichomoniasis (trich).
- Vaginal discharge is normal. If you have a vaginal infection you may notice a change in the color, amount or odour of the discharge.

What causes vaginal infections?

- Bacteria (germs) that normally live in the vagina and have overgrown causing symptoms.
- Things that can allow bacteria to overgrow include use of bath oils, bubble baths, douches, scented pads or tampons, poor hygiene, or use of tight, non-absorbent underwear.

What is yeast?

- Yeast is a fungus (Candida or Monilia) that normally lives in the vagina.
- Yeast overgrows more commonly when a woman is on antibiotics, pregnant, or has an illness such as diabetes.
- Yeast is not generally sexually transmitted.

What are the symptoms of yeast?

- Symptoms include:
 - clumpy white discharge from the vagina;
 - itching, burning and redness around the vagina.

How is yeast treated?

- Yeast is treated with antifungal medications sold at a drugstore, which are available in 1 to 7 day treatments.

What is Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)?

- BV is an overgrowth of germs.
- BV is not usually sexually transmitted. It can occur in women who have never had sex and in women who are not currently sexually active.
- BV is more common in women who:
 - are sexually active;
 - douche frequently;
 - have genital infections;
 - have an intrauterine device (IUD);
 - have multiple sexual partners.

What are the symptoms of BV?

- Symptoms include:
 - thin white to gray discharge;
 - “fishy” odour, especially after sex and during a period;
 - burning, itching or irritation around the vagina.

Many women do not have symptoms of BV.

How is BV treated?

- BV is usually treated with an antibiotic.
- BV may return even if treated.
- Usually sexual partners do not need treatment.

What will decrease the risks of getting BV?

- Avoid things that disrupt the natural balance of germs in the vagina: douching, frequent use of bath oils, soaps, bubble baths, tampons or pads that are scented.
- Wipe from front to back after going to the bathroom.
- Avoid tight jeans.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Sleep in loose or no underwear.
- BV and Pregnancy

- BV may result in premature labour.
- It is important to receive regular prenatal care and screening so that BV can be treated before it causes problems.

What is Trichomoniasis (Trich)?

- Trich is almost always a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a protozoan.
- There have been rare reports of non-sexual transmissions.

What are the symptoms of Trich?

- Symptoms include:
 - frothy yellow or green discharge;
 - unpleasant odour;
 - burning, itching or redness around the vagina.
- The infection may cause some discomfort during intercourse.
- Most men and 20-50% of women do not have any symptoms.

How is Trich treated?

- Trich is usually treated with an antibiotic.
- Regular partners should also be treated.

What will decrease the risks of Trich?

- Limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- Use a condom during sex. This will help to protect you and your partner against Trich and other STIs.
- Avoid sexual contact if you or your partner have symptoms or are being treated for an STI.

How can vaginal infections be diagnosed?

- A sample from the vagina is taken and sent to a lab for diagnosis. Tests done in an STI clinic may be able to identify the vaginal infection at the time of the clinic visit.

For more information contact:

Your family doctor, local public health office, HealthLine at 811 OR the following sexual health clinics:

Sexual Health Clinic
100 – 310 Idylwyld Drive North
SASKATOON SK S7L 0Z2
Speak with a nurse at 306-655-4642

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic
2110 Hamilton Street
REGINA SK S4P 2E3
Phone: 306-766-7788

Sexual Health Clinic
2nd Floor, MacIntosh Mall
800 Central Avenue
PRINCE ALBERT SK S6V 6G1
Phone: 306-765-6540

Battlefords Sexual Health Clinic
Rm. 104, 1192 – 101 Street
NORTH BATTLEFORD SK S9A 0Z6
Phone: 306-937-6846

Reference: Vaginitis, Trichomoniasis, Bacterial Vaginosis and Vaginal Yeast Infection, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health (2009); Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections, Public Health Agency of Canada (2008); Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Centers for Disease Control (2010); www.sexualityandu.ca