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VAGINITIS

A number of different problems may cause inflammation or infection of the vagina or labia. These include bacterial vaginosis, yeast and some sexually transmitted diseases. If you have had sex with an unfamiliar partner and now have a discharge that is different from your normal discharge or other symptoms, please call for an appointment.

What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most frequently occurring vaginal infection. Treatment is available that quickly cures this infection. Left untreated BV may increase a woman's risk of pelvic inflammatory disease, endometritis, cervicitis, pregnancy complications, and post-operative infections.

What causes bacterial vaginosis?

The primary cause of BV is an overgrowth of anaerobic bacteria. The healthy vagina has a small amount of these bacteria present. It is when a disruption to the normal pH balance occurs that these bacteria flourish. Treatment is necessary to cure the infection and help reestablish the normal pH and bacterial balance. When the balance is normal a bacteria called Lactobacilli is present. This Lactobacilli creates a hydrogen peroxide like discharge that helps maintain the health of the vaginal tissues. Other causes of BV can be contamination of e coli bacteria from the rectum. Poor health, poor hygiene and douching can also make a woman more prone to BV.

What are the symptoms of bacterial vaginosis?

The most common sign of BV is an unpleasant odor that is often described a smelling "fishy." Itching and/or burning may be present. Many times women have no symptoms and are unaware of the infection until they have a routine pelvic exam.

What is the treatment?

Treatment usually consists of three to seven nights of a vaginal cream or an oral antibiotic course. It is important to complete the entire treatment even if symptoms have resolved. Recurrence is common as the treatment kills the "good" bacteria as well as the "bad." See below for tips to help reestablish a healthy vaginal balance.



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How can I prevent vaginal infections?

- Good hygiene-wiping from front to back
- Use unscented soaps and laundry detergents. Do not use bubble bath or bath oils
- Use unscented tampons, pads and toilet paper
- Wear cotton underwear. Avoid thongs. Avoid tight clothing
- Do not douche. Do not use feminine deodorant sprays or wipes.
- Keep the perineal area dry. Change out of wet swimsuits or exercise clothes as soon as possible
- Avoid shaving the perineal area as this can cause irritation that leads to infection
- Taking probiotics can help promote the growth of the beneficial/healthy bacteria in the body. When choosing a probiotic look on the label for one that has at least 7 different strands of bacteria and at least 10 million cultures. Ones that require refrigeration are best.
- Vitamin D3 5000 IU daily for at least one month can help in the cases of recurrent BV