

Vaginal discharge

The vagina discharges a natural acidic liquid that helps to maintain the balance of good and bad bacteria that all women have within the vagina. During sex this liquid increases and acts as a lubricant as well as giving some protection against bacteria. If you catch a sexually transmitted infection or the balance of bacteria changes in the vagina then vaginal discharge will often change.

NORMAL vaginal discharge is:

- transparent
- thin
- smooth
- without strong odour

BEWARE!

Douching inside your vagina on a regular basis (more than once a month) destroys the natural balance of the vagina and can increase your risk of sexually transmitted infections.

ABNORMAL vaginal discharge is:

- yellow or green or white
- thick
- foamy
- lumpy
- with a strong odour
- causes itching



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

- If you notice an abnormal vaginal discharge go for a sexual health check up.
- If you have an abnormal vaginal discharge there is a 90% probability that you have a vaginal or sexually transmitted infection.
- **DO NOT** wash inside the vagina before going for the medical check.
- Your regular sexual partner should also go for a medical check up.

TAMPEP

European Network for HIV/STI
Prevention and Health Promotion
Among Migrant Sex Workers



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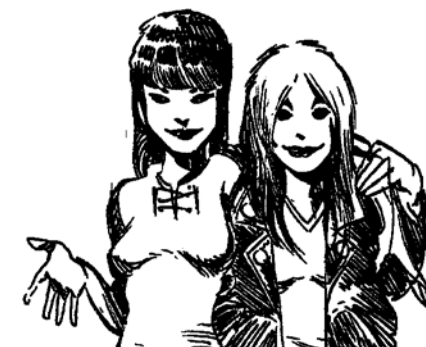
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For more information:

ENGLISH
STI

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



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CANDIDA - THRUSH

Candida is not always sexually transmitted. Many women get Candida after a course of antibiotics or when they are run down.

Cause: Fungus

Symptoms

- Increased or smelly (yeast) and lumpy (cottage cheese) vaginal discharge
- Inflamed or itchy vagina

Test and Treatment

Candida infection is easy to diagnose through a swab at a medical check up and can be easily cured with anti-fungal pessaries and cream or course of tablets. You can purchase treatments at a pharmacy in some countries or go to a doctor for diagnosis and treatment. Always complete the course of treatment.

CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancies and infertility if untreated.

Cause: Bacteria

Symptoms

Many women have no symptoms at all. Some women have one or more of the following:

- Increased or unusual vaginal discharge
- Pain when urinating
- Unusual bleeding after sex
- Pain during intercourse
- Pain in the abdomen

Test and Treatment

Chlamydia infection is easy to diagnose through a swab, urine or blood sample at a medical check up and can be easily cured with a course of antibiotic tablets. Always complete the course of treatment prescribed.

CYSTITIS

Cystitis is not always sexually transmitted. It can be caused by poor personal hygiene.

Cause: Bacteria

Symptoms

- Urinating more than normal
- Pain or burning sensation when urinating
- Blood in the urine (it can affect the kidneys)
- Inflamed or itchy vagina
- Fever, you feel hot and cold at the same time

Test and Treatment

Cystitis infection is easy to diagnose through a urine sample at a medical check up and can be easily cured with a course of antibiotic tablets. It helps to drink lots of water to flush the bacteria out. Always complete the course of treatment prescribed.

GENITAL WARTS

Cause: Virus

Symptoms

Appear a few weeks or up to eight months after infection

- Warts around or in the vagina and anus, they are painless but can be itchy

Test and Treatment

Genital Warts are easy to diagnose when visible during a medical check up or through pap smear. Doctors can remove them by painting a solution on them that makes them shrink and disappear or they can be removed by freezing, cauterising or surgery. It is important to get treatment early as the warts can spread; the longer you wait the more warts there are, the longer the treatment will take. The warts may recur and you should regularly check to see if they have reappeared.

GONORRHOEA

Gonorrhoea can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancies and infertility if untreated.

Cause: Bacteria

Symptoms

Many women have no symptoms at all. Some women have one or more of the following:

- Increased and/or unusual yellow or green vaginal discharge
- Pain when urinating
- Pain in the abdomen

Test and Treatment

Gonorrhoea infection is easy to diagnose through a swab or a smear at a medical check up and can be cured with a course of antibiotic tablets or injections. Always complete the course of treatment prescribed.

HERPES

Cause: Virus

Symptoms

- Small painful or itchy blisters around or in the vagina, anus or mouth
- Burning sensation when urinating
- Itchy, swollen and sometimes painful lymph glands
- The symptoms will disappear after two or three weeks, but can reappear later.

Test and Treatment

Herpes infection is easy to diagnose when the blisters are present through a swab or a tissue culture at a medical check up. There is no cure for Herpes at present, but doctors can prescribe treatment to alleviate the symptoms during a Herpes outbreak.

LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY!

- ALWAYS use condoms because they protect you against sexually transmitted infections.
- If you have symptoms or are in pain, go for a medical check up.
- Don't self prescribe; get a medical check up to ensure correct treatment.

SYPHILIS

Cause: Bacteria

Symptoms

First stage – two to twelve weeks after infection

- One or more hard and painless sores up to 1cm wide appear in the vagina, mouth or anus. Sometimes it is difficult to see the sores because they are inside the vagina or anus

- Swollen lymph glands in the neck or groin.

Second stage – from twelve weeks after infection

- Rash all over the body but especially on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet
- Flu-like symptoms; headache, sore throat, tiredness, fever.
- Loss of hair, bald patches appearing on the head
- Wart like growths near the genitals

Third phase - a number of years after infection

If untreated Syphilis infection results in sores on your skin, paralysis of your internal organs, loss of feeling in the extremities of the body, blindness and eventually insanity.

Test and Treatment

Syphilis infection is diagnosed through a blood test at a medical check up, it can take about a week to get the results and it can take up to three months for the infection to show in the test. Syphilis can be easily treated with a course of antibiotic injections. But you will need to go back for further medical check ups to ensure the infection has been fully cured. Always complete the course of treatment and go back for the medical check up to make sure you are cured.

TRICHOMONIASIS

Cause: Parasite (a one - celled organism)

Symptoms

- Milky, frothy and smelly vaginal discharge
- Inflamed and painful vagina
- Inflamed urethra and bladder resulting in pain when urinating

Test and Treatment

Trichomoniasis infection is easy to diagnose through a swab at a medical check up and can be easily cured with a single treatment. It is important that you follow the doctor's directions properly. You must not drink any alcohol on the day of treatment.

VAGINITIS

Cause: Bacteria

Symptoms

- Smelly vaginal discharge, the smell of the discharge intensifies when it has been in contact with semen
- Itchy vagina
- Vaginal wind

Test and Treatment

Vaginitis infection is easy to diagnose through a swab at a medical check up and can be easily cured with a short course of tablets. You must not drink alcohol during the treatment period.