

DESCRIPTION

Vaginitis is the inflammation, pain, redness and swelling of the vagina. The vagina normally has a thin, whitish or clear discharge which will change if an infection is present. [**Texture** (thick, thin or curd-like); **Color** (white, gray or yellowish); **Odor** (fishy smell), **Amount** (heavy or light)]

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Itching in the vagina or vulva (external genitals)
- Burning and redness of the vagina or vulva
- Vaginal dryness (due to atrophy)
- Pain with sexual intercourse
- Pain and burning when urinating
- Symptoms may vary with the menstrual cycle

CAUSES

- Infectious vaginitis can be caused by bacterial vaginosis (most common cause), vulvovaginal candidiasis (a yeast infection, or trichomoniasis (a parasite infection) or another bacteria, such as strep.
- Noninfectious causes include a decrease of natural estrogen (at menopause), an irritant (such as clothes that rub), or an allergic reaction (such as spermicide).

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Use of antibiotic or steroid medications
- Using douches, bubble baths or harsh cleansers
- Use of spermicide or an IUD
- Having multiple sex partners
- Sexual Intercourse
- Changes in hormone levels (pregnancy, breast-feeding, menopause)

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Wear underwear and pantyhose with a cotton crotch. Avoid wearing tight jeans, pant or pantyhose.
- Keep the genital area clean and dry. Do not douche.
- Don't sit around in a bathing suit or damp clothes.
- Avoid perfumed or deodorant soap, detergents, fabric softeners, bubble baths, powder, and vaginal sprays.
- Always wipe away from the vagina (front to back) after bowel movements.
- Use a latex condom during sexual intercourse unless you and your partner are monogamous (having only one mate).
- Use a blow dryer (on a low, cool setting) to dry the genital area after baths, showers or swimming.

TREATMENT

Treatment will depend on the cause of the vaginitis. Medications are usually prescribed for infections and sometimes for vaginal dryness and irritation. Your sexual partner needs treatment if trichomoniasis is the cause. With treatment, symptoms usually clear up in 3 or 4 days. Without treatment, infections can lead to more serious medical problems, increase your risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or cause pregnancy complications. Vaginitis may recur even after treatment. Do not assume you have a yeast infection and use antifungals to treat yourself without a proper diagnosis. Those medications will not treat other types of infections. Similarly, never use douches, soaps or herbal remedies to try and treat a vaginal infection. Avoid sexual intercourse until treatment is complete.

MEDICATIONS

- For infection, an antibiotic, antifungal or antiparasitic medication may be prescribed. Take the entire drug as prescribed, even if symptoms improve in a few days.
- For vaginal dryness, estrogen creams or oral tablets may be recommended.
- For vaginal irritation, steroid or hormone creams may be prescribed.

- ↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ↳ Antibiotics or steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- You experience abdominal, pelvic or back pain
- You notice an increase in vaginal discharge or bleeding
- You develop fever, chills, nausea or vomiting
- You become dizzy or lightheaded