

Vaginitis (Yeast Infections and Trichomonas)

What is vaginitis?

Vaginitis is a name for a common infection in the vagina caused by different germs. Yeast and trichomonas are examples of germs that can cause vaginitis. The symptoms of vaginitis can vary depending on the germ. To find out if you have vaginitis, a nurse or doctor will need to examine you and take some tests.

What causes yeast infections and what are the symptoms?

Yeast infections are caused by the extra growth of certain yeast organisms that normally live in the vagina. This extra growth can be caused by many factors including, taking antibiotics or birth control pills, damp underwear, tight pants, poor diet, or use of certain vaginal products. Often, it happens for no clear reason. Yeast is *not usually* transmitted during sex with an infected person.

In women, the vagina will become very itchy and sore. Sometimes a cottage cheese-like discharge will appear. The vagina may become red and dry, which could make sexual intercourse painful. In men, there are generally no symptoms, but a rash may appear on the penis.

How is a yeast infection treated?

There are a number of ways to treat yeast infections. Treatment options include pills or creams, and ointments or tablets that are inserted into the vagina. Some treatments require a prescription and others can be bought at the pharmacy. If you are not sure that you have a yeast infection, it may be good to check with your doctor before you treat yourself.

Important: Women who repeatedly get yeast infections should see their doctor. This can occasionally be a sign of another disease.

What causes trichomonas and what are the symptoms?

Trichomonas is a germ that you can get by having sex with an infected person. Symptoms can include more vaginal discharge that may be yellow-green, the vagina may become sore and itchy, a strong vaginal odour, and pain during sexual intercourse or when going to the bathroom (urinate). If your main symptom is foul smelling discharge, please read about bacterial vaginosis in BC HealthFile [#08g Bacterial Vaginosis](#).

Men often do not show any symptoms but may feel a slight burning feeling while passing urine, or see some fluid or redness at the end of the penis.

How is trichomonas treated?

Trichomonas is treated with antibiotic pills. The person(s) you have sex with should also be treated even if they have no symptoms.

Important: Do not have sex until after you and your partner(s) have finished the treatment.

Should I be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

If you have different sexual partners, or if your partner has different partners, you should also be tested for gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis and HIV (the virus linked to AIDS). You should also consider getting vaccine shots to prevent hepatitis B infection.

Important: The more sexual partners you have, the higher your risk of getting a STD.

Birth control pills

Birth control pills may not work very well when you are taking some antibiotic pills. Keep taking your birth control pills while taking any medication, and also use a second form of birth control, such as a condom, until your next period after completing the antibiotics.

Ways to reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease

- Have sex with only one partner who has been tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), who has been treated if necessary and who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.
- Use a female or male condom every time you have sex. Condoms offer protection against STDs, but they must be used properly.
- Have regular check-ups for STDs.
- Decide not to have sex.

Important facts about condoms

- A condom acts like a barrier that helps prevent the exchange of body fluids, the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy.
- A new condom should be used each time you have sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal, or oral sex).
- Check the expiry date on the condom package.
- Use only water-based lubricants with the male latex condom. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, lotion or baby oil, can weaken and destroy latex.
- Female condoms are made of polyurethane. This material can be used with any type of lubricant, water-based or oil-based.
- Some lubricants contain chemicals called spermicides to help protect against unwanted pregnancy. If they irritate your genitals, don't use them.
- Do not use a male condom together with a female condom as the friction created may cause tearing of either product.
- If a condom breaks during sex remove it immediately and apply a new condom.
- Remember! Condoms do not offer 100 per cent protection from STDs and unwanted pregnancy. It will not consistently prevent transmission of STDs passed through skin-to-skin contact – for example, syphilis, human papilloma virus (warts) and herpes. However, if used properly, they are very effective and can reduce the risk of transmission of these STDs.

Putting on a male condom

- Take the condom carefully out of the packet.
- Place the condom on the tip of the penis when it is hard and erect, but before it touches the partner's body. Make sure that the rolled-up condom rim faces outward.
- With the other hand, pinch the tip of the condom to remove any trapped air, and unroll the condom to the base of the erect penis.

- After intercourse and before the penis becomes soft, withdraw the penis carefully, holding the rim of the condom against the penis, so that semen does not spill out.
- Slide the condom gently off the penis, and knot the open end.
- After using the condom, throw it in the garbage.

Putting on a female condom

- A condom can be inserted up to eight hours before sexual intercourse.
- Open the package carefully. Hold the small ring at the closed end of the condom between the thumb and middle finger.
- Find a comfortable position, either lying down, sitting with your knees apart or standing with one foot raised on a stool, squeeze the small ring and insert it into the vagina as far as you can.
- Put a finger inside the condom and push the small ring inside as far as possible. It is also possible to insert the condom by putting it onto the erect penis before intercourse.
- Make sure that the part of the condom with the outer ring is outside the body. The outer ring will lie flat against the body when the penis is inside the condom.
- When the penis enters the vagina, make sure that the penis is inside the condom.
- Immediately after sexual intercourse, remove the condom by gently twisting the outer ring and pulling the condom out, making sure that no semen is spilt and throw it in the garbage.



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