

Hope & Healing

Vaginitis Understanding Vaginal Infections

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Sometimes during life, regardless of age, state in life, or sexual activity, most women will have vaginitis. Thereby, many visits to gynecologists are for this problem.

You may already know a lot about protecting yourself from life-threatening infections transmitted through sex. Now, you can understand the causes, symptoms, and treatments of vaginitis.

Remember: Vaginitis can be an indication of another problem; diabetes is the most common example. Or it can indicate a problem with your sexual health.

Each instance of vaginitis has a specific cause but each episode is different. It can be severe one time and mild another. Here's what is important: treatments of vaginitis are specifically aimed at a particular disease. So, the diagnosis must be precise. And, when the specific treatment is prescribed, be sure to complete it.

Vaginitis causes loss of time from work, interrupted sexual activity, or possible infection of your sexual partner. As mentioned, it may also indicate diabetes. And, if vaginitis is present during pregnancy, the baby may become infected during delivery. Fortunately, our treatments are more specific today and a return to a normal state can be expected.

What Vaginitis Is _____

Vaginitis is usually thought of as being internal, inside the vagina, but it can also be present outside (vulvovaginitis). The causes are:

- Infection.

- Hormone imbalance.
- Irritation from trauma or clothes.
- Allergic reactions.

Common Symptoms of Vaginitis _

Most women with vaginitis experience:

- Burning and itching within the vagina.
- Pain during urination.
- Pain during intercourse.

Note: Vaginitis may be silent and can be discovered by your doctor during a routine examination.

Vaginal Discharge _____

You might ask, "When I have a vaginal discharge, is it vaginitis?" Not necessarily. The vagina is a self-cleaning organ. It naturally generates a discharge and the discharge is clear or cloudy-white. It normally has little odor and causes no irritation.

The amount and thickness of normal vaginal discharge may vary, depending on:

- The phase of your menstrual cycle.
- Stress and emotional upset.
- The state of sexual arousal.

The healthy vagina contains many germs, but they are in balance. It's when the balance gets upset and one germ type gets a foothold or a foreign germ is introduced that the vaginal discharge

becomes thick and the odor strong and unpleasant.

Types of Vaginitis _____

When the balance within the vagina becomes upset, there are three major germs or organisms that can cause vaginitis: yeast, or candida; bacterial vaginosis due to gardnerella (a germ) and trichomonas (a parasite).

The Fungus Connection _____

Yeast infection causes 20 to 40% of all vaginitis. It is the type that can return time after time. Yeast cells are normally present in the vagina, and in the mouth and intestine and on the skin, where they live in balance. When diabetes develops or an antibiotic upsets the balance, a thick white discharge develops, causing burning and itching. The odor isn't unpleasant. Sometimes a yeast vaginitis is silent and diagnosed during routine pelvic examination.

But, most yeast infections do cause discomfort. And, most can be cleared up with quick, safe and effective treatments. During pregnancy, yeast infections tend to return again and again, if present during delivery, the baby is exposed and if infected can develop feeding and skin problems.

The Germ Connection _____

The Gardnerella germ is a frequent cause of vaginitis. The discharge is thin, foamy, gray to white in color and has an offensive fishy odor. The discharge is abundant but the inflammation within the vagina is minimal.

The Parasite Connection _____

This type of vaginitis is also frequent. It is caused by an invisible parasite. It is usually spread through sex but it can also occur without sexual intercourse.

The discharge of trichomonas is usually profuse, green-yellow in color and has a bad odor. The parasite causes itching, burning, and painful urination.

The Estrogen Connection _____

This is more of an irritation than an infection. It occurs when age or surgical removal of the ovaries causes estrogen production to fall, removing the major stimulus to moisture and healthy vaginal tissues. The vagina becomes dry and inflamed, causing pain during intercourse and a discharge.

Reducing the Risk of Developing Vaginitis _____

There are many things you can do to help yourself avoid vaginitis. Here are several:

- Control stress.
- Avoid fatty foods and keep your weight under control.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Use lubrication during intercourse.
- Avoid tight clothing, such as jeans on top of pantyhose that are on top of panties.
- Avoid frequent douching.

- Avoid use of vaginal deodorants.
- Control diabetes, if you have it.
- Be aware of the increased risk of yeast vaginitis when taking antibiotics.

Treatments of Vaginitis _____

Treatments are either prescribed by your doctor after he or she has made the diagnosis, or they are bought without a prescription (over the counter).

Over the counter treatments can provide the convenience of treatment without an office visit but if you aren't better in 7 days, discontinue the treatment and call for an appointment with your doctor.

Women who should not use over the counter treatments include:

- Pregnant women.
- Those who have never had vaginitis before.
- Girls under 12 or even older without parent's supervision.
- Those who have frequent infections of uncertain cause.

Summary _____

For self-treatment of vaginitis avoid out of date or borrowed medicine. If in doubt about self-diagnosis, ask your doctor for an examination to provide a precise diagnosis and a prescription for the best medicine.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of the Open Mind

Your thoughts and actions can make your life, "A heaven of hell and a hell of heaven." It depends on whether your mind is opened up or shut down. We shut our minds down through laziness, prejudice, self-satisfaction, and cocksureness. These attributes divide people into one of two groups: the learners and the non-learners. Many fine things are missed through closing of the mind. What a pity nowadays since you can open up endless opportunities for yourself through the methods of self-learning that can make you a self-taught expert on most anything.

With experience you will develop seven learning attributes: 1. A sense of balance that will guide you, 2. A sense of what's important to help establish priorities, 3. A sense of time so as not to waste it, 4. A sense of the value of evidence to prove what will work, 5. A readiness to examine new ideas, 6. An ability to read fast and retain the important points, 7. An ability to express yourself on paper and by spoken word.

Remember, everything that has been done can be better if you put your mind to it.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.