

symptom improvement. Diet changes can provide symptom relief for some women. Nurses can suggest that women limit their consumption of refined sugar, salt, alcohol, and caffeinated beverages. Three small to moderate-size meals and three small snacks a day that are rich in complex carbohydrates and fiber have been reported to relieve symptoms ([American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2011](#)). Exercise may also provide symptom relief. Aerobic exercise increases beta-endorphin levels to offset symptoms of depression and elevate mood. Stress reduction techniques may also help with symptom management ([Lentz, 2012](#)).

If these strategies do not provide significant symptom relief in 1 to 2 months, medication is often added. Medications used in the treatment of PMS include diuretics, prostaglandin inhibitors (NSAIDs), progesterone, and OCPs; however, no single medication alleviates all PMS symptoms.

## **Vaginal Infections**

Vaginal discharge and itching of the vulva and vagina are among the most common reasons a woman seeks help from a health care provider. Women complain of vaginal discharge more than any other gynecologic symptoms; however, vaginal discharge resulting from an infection must be distinguished from normal secretions. Physiologic leukorrhea is a normal vaginal secretion occurring at ovulation and just before menses. It is clear to cloudy in appearance, nonirritating, and has a mild inoffensive odor. On the other hand, inflammatory leukorrhea is caused by physical (e.g., forgotten tampon), chemical (e.g., bubble baths, douching), or infectious (e.g., *Candida* fungi, *Trichomonas* protozoa parasites, bacteria) agents. It is a glutinous, gray-white discharge with an offensive odor. Diagnosis is confirmed with microscopic evaluation of vaginal secretions, vaginal culture, or rapid testing methods.

Treatment varies depending on the cause. Health teaching is important in the management of vaginal discharge. Adolescent girls need reassurance that increased vaginal mucus can occur at the time of ovulation, before menstruation, or with sexual excitement. Many teenage girls mistake these variations as signs of infection. Girls should be taught to wipe from front to back after toileting and to realize that vaginitis can result from irritation, foreign objects, and sexual activity. Nurses should stress the importance of an