

For Teens: Understanding Vaginitis



Vaginitis is a name for a group of vaginal infections. These include trichomoniasis, bacterial vaginosis (BV), and yeast infections. Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). But having any type of vaginitis may increase your risk of catching other STIs.

What to look for

Unusual discharge is the most common sign of vaginitis. The discharge varies by the type of infection. But not all discharge means that you have an infection. A small amount of discharge with no other symptoms, like a bad smell or itching, can be normal:

- Trichomoniasis may cause frothy greenish or yellow discharge, which can have an odor. The vagina can itch or burn. There can be swelling or redness at the opening of the vagina. There can be pain during sex or urination.
- Bacterial vaginosis (BV) may cause grayish-white, watery, or milky discharge. The discharge can have a strong fishy odor.
- Yeast infections may cause discharge that looks like cottage cheese. There can also be intense itching or burning in the vagina. There can be swelling or redness at the opening of the vagina. There can be pain during sex or urination.

Treatment

Medicines can cure all types of vaginitis. For trichomoniasis, your partner also needs to be treated. Otherwise, it can be passed back to you. To limit yeast infections, wash with mild soap and water. Don't douche. Wearing cotton underwear can also help limit yeast infections. Change out of clothes that are wet, like exercise clothes or bathing suits, as soon as possible.

If you don't get treated

- Discharge, burning, and itching can continue.
- Having BV or trichomoniasis can make it easier for you to catch other STIs.
- BV can put you at risk of pelvic inflammatory disease.

Tell your partner if you have trichomoniasis. Men usually don't have symptoms. But, without treatment, they can pass it back to you or to others.

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