

Vaginitis

What is vaginitis?

Vaginitis (VAJ-in-EYE-tuss) is a condition that causes itching, burning, irritation, odor, and discharge from your vagina and genital area. Your doctor can tell if you have it by examining you and running some tests.

There are four common types: bacterial vaginosis (VAJ-in-OH-suss), vulvovaginal candidiasis (VUL-vo-VAJ-in-uhl CAN-did-EYE-uh-suss), trichomoniasis (TRICK-oh-mo-NYE-uh-suss), and atrophic (A-TRO-fick) vaginitis.

What are the symptoms?

Bacterial vaginosis occurs when normal bacteria in the vagina overgrows. You can't get it through sex. One-half of women with the condition may have no symptoms. Your vagina may itch or you might have gray discharge with a "fishy" odor.

Vulvovaginal candidiasis is a fungal yeast infection. A bit of this yeast may live in your vagina without causing symptoms. If you've recently taken antibiotics, douche often, or have uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, the yeast may overgrow and cause itching, thick white discharge, burning, or redness of the genital area.

Trichomoniasis is caused by a parasite. The most common symptom is a frothy green or yellow discharge, with or without itching.

Atrophic vaginitis affects women after menopause or who have low levels of estrogen. You may have dryness of the vagina, urgency to urinate, and redness and irritation of the genital area.

How is each type treated?

Bacterial vaginosis—After testing you, your doctor may offer you medicine. Your sex partner usually won't need to be treated.

Vulvovaginal candidiasis—Your doctor may recommend vaginal cream or vaginal suppositories. Oral medicine is also available. Your sex partner does not need to be treated.

Trichomoniasis—Oral medicine can clear this infection. However, if your sex partner is not treated, you can get reinfected.

Atrophic vaginitis—Your doctor may prescribe vaginal estrogen cream.

Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/194.xml>

Medline Plus, National Institutes of Health

Web site: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000897.htm>

Mayo Clinic

Web site: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/vaginitis/DS00255>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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