

Fact Sheet - English

COMMON VAGINAL AND VULVAL CONDITIONS



What Is A Normal Vaginal Discharge?

All women have a vaginal discharge. The amount varies from woman to woman. It is sometimes heavier, sometimes lighter, and sometimes you won't notice it at all.

Menopausal women often notice that they have less vaginal discharge. It also depends on where a woman is in her menstrual cycle and whether she is using hormonal contraception. The discharge keeps the vagina healthy, but sometimes it changes in a way that causes problems.

How Would I Know If I Had A Vaginal Infection?

You might notice:

- itching, burning or soreness around the vaginal area
- an increase in the amount of vaginal discharge or an unusual or unpleasant smell
- pain on passing urine
- painful intercourse

If you have any of these symptoms you should see your doctor or Family Planning clinic.

What Can I Do To Keep My Vagina And Vulva Healthy?

There are a number of simple things you can do:

- Wear cotton or silk underwear rather than synthetics and change daily. Wear tights or stockings for as short a time as possible
- Wash underwear in hot water and pure soap and double rinse to make sure any irritants are removed before you wear them
- Change out of damp swimming costumes or sports clothes as soon as possible after swimming or exercise
- Use tampons instead of sanitary pads or panty liners. If using pads, change them regularly and avoid perfumed or deodorised pads and tampons

- Avoid tight fitting clothes such as jeans as this creates a moist, warm environment that encourages the overgrowth of bacteria and yeasts
- Never douche - except if it is specifically prescribed by a doctor to treat an infection. Douching increases your risk of vaginal irritation. A healthy vagina does not need a vaginal deodorant
- Avoid using soaps, bubble baths, bath salts, perfumes and perfumed talcs around the vaginal area. And never ever use anything harsh such as disinfectants - even diluted, near your vagina
- A gentle moisturiser like aqueous cream may be advised. Use water or soap substitutes to wash the area
- Always wipe from the front to the back after going to the toilet since this stops bowel organisms being swept into the vagina. Don't use perfumed toilet paper because it can cause irritation.

Sometimes vaginal and vulval symptoms can be due to other more serious causes so if your symptoms do not get better make sure you see your doctor for a check up.

For Further Information

- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- NRS (for deaf) 133 677
- Or visit your nearest Family Planning clinic

Reviewed: May 2013 | FPNWSW 05/13

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www.fpnsw.org.au | [talkline 1300 658 886](tel:1300658886) | [bookshop](#)

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Family Planning NSW is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the NSW Ministry of Health

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Reviewed May 2014/FPNSW 05/14