

PROMOTING GOOD VAGINAL HEALTH

SUGGESTIONS FOR ALL WOMEN:

- Wear cotton underwear only.
- Do not wear tight clothes.
- Wash and change into dry clothes immediately after swimming or exercising.
- Urinate and wash after intercourse with water only. (You can sit on the toilet and squirt with a squirt bottle.)
- Do not use antibacterial soap. According to dermatologists, unscented Dove is the best choice for bathing.
- Never clean genital area (outside or inside) with a cloth or sponge. Clean external hair-bearing area by allowing soapy water in shower to flow over the area or by simply sitting in soapy bath water.
- Drink plenty of milk and eat yogurt. Ingestion of the live bacteria found in dairy products replenishes the healthy bacteria in the vagina which prevent yeast and bacterial infections.
- If antibiotics are needed for a respiratory illness, dental work, or skin issues, ask your physician for a prescription of Diflucan to take weekly while on the antibiotic. (We can typically prescribe this for you over-the-phone if your other doctor cannot.) This can often prevent yeast infections. In addition, taking probiotic supplements during and after can be helpful.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN WITH CHRONIC VAGINAL INFECTIONS:

- Avoid thong underwear which can rub and irritate the vulva.
- Going without underwear when sleeping during the night can be helpful.
- Avoid wearing liners or pads daily unless discharge is excessive and liners may help keep the skin less moist.
- Avoid excessive washing. Bathing less often than every day can be helpful.
- Avoid scented laundry detergent or changing laundry detergent, scented toilet paper, douches, feminine sprays, bubble bath, any oils or scented products in the bath or shower. These alter the pH of the vagina, and infections can occur more easily.
- Do not shave or wax the vulvar area.
- Avoid simple sugars like regular sodas, other sweetened drinks, desserts, and minimizing complex carbohydrates (breads, pastas, rice, potatoes) in your diet.
- When vaginal infections are frequent, avoid over-the-counter treatments for vaginal infections. Prescription medications for vaginal infections are much more effective after the actual type of infection has been confirmed by testing in the office. For symptom relief until treatment is effective, over-the-counter hydrocortisone may be used as much as needed. Warm baths with nothing added to the water are also soothing. Wash the genital area with fresh cup of water before getting out of bath, pat dry, then allow the area to air-dry.
- For help with frequent vaginal infections, take probiotic supplements (containing high amounts of the live, healthy bacteria found in dairy products) which may be found at grocery stores and pharmacies. Start with 1 to 10 billion Colony Forming Units (CFUs) per day. For some chronic infections, taking 15 – 20 billion CFUs per day may be helpful. When the infection is resolved, take 1 to 3 billion CFUs per day for several weeks or indefinitely to avoid a return of the infection. If these suggestions are not helpful, changing to a brand of probiotics at People's Pharmacy called "Probiotic Pearls" may be helpful. This brand may have a higher rate of absorption compared to other brands.
- For chronic vaginal infections over several months, talk to your doctor about using boric acid vaginal suppositories. These can be found at People's Pharmacy, and the recommended dose is 600 mg once to twice daily for at least two weeks or longer.