

Vaginitis is a condition where there is a change in the normal balance of bacteria or an infection (like a yeast infection) in the vagina. It can cause symptoms like discharge, itching, odour and pain during sex. Vaginitis is very common and most women have it at least once – or more – in their lifetime. It is important that you seek medical care if you have these symptoms so that your health care provider can identify what’s causing the vaginitis and advise the right treatment. There are many steps you can take that might help prevent vaginitis.

## WHAT TO DO

- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet (this will avoid spreading fecal matter to your vagina) and use unbleached toilet paper.
- To wash your genitalia, use warm (not hot) water. It’s best to use your hand instead of a washcloth.
- Always rinse well and pat dry.
- Take antibiotics only when you need them. This medication can destroy the “good” bacteria in your vagina and upset its normal balance.
- Wear cotton underwear and pantyhose with a cotton lining.
- During your menstrual period, change tampons at least three times a day, or switch between tampons and pads.
- Tampons should not be left in the vagina for more than eight hours. Be sure to remove the last tampon you use.
- Use condoms during sex and limit your number of sex partners.

## WHAT TO AVOID

- Hot baths, hot tubs and whirlpools.
- Scented or harsh soaps (like deodorant or antibacterial soaps) and bubble baths.
- Scented tampons and pads, and daily use of panty liners.
- “Feminine hygiene” sprays and powders.
- Douches: Other than normal bathing, you don’t need to clean your vagina. Douching can change the natural balance in the vagina and can actually increase your chances of having an infection. Remember that douching won’t clear up a vaginal infection.
- Tight clothing (e.g., thongs) and synthetic underwear.
- Wearing underwear to bed and pantyhose in hot weather.

## SOURCES:

- 1) Vaginitis. HealthLink BC. 2015. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/zx1776>
- 2) Vaginitis. MyHealthAlberta. 2016. <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=zx1776>