

## PROMOTING GOOD VAGINAL HEALTH

- Prevent moisture build up:
  - Wear cotton underwear only. Fabrics besides cotton, such as spandex, are not as breathable.
  - Do not wear tight clothes.
  - Wash and change into dry clothes immediately after swimming or exercising.
  - Avoid regularly wearing panty liners or pads.
- Urinate immediately after intercourse.
- Do not use soap over the genital area. Ideally, all women should wash with water only. The vagina is a self-cleaning system, and use of soap kills the healthy bacteria, which makes it easier for “bad” bacteria or yeast to take over. According to dermatologists, unscented Dove bar soap is the best choice for bathing if absolutely necessary. Never clean the genital area (outside or inside) using a cloth or sponge.
- 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.)
- Avoid thong underwear which can rub and irritate the vulva.
- Go without wearing underwear while you sleep. This gives your body the opportunity to “breathe” and prevents moisture build up.
- 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. When taking baths, do not put anything in the water such as oils, bath salts, bath bombs, bubbles, or use other scented soap products.
- Avoid scented 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.
- Consider urinating as well as rinsing the genital area immediately after sex—with water only. (You can sit on the toilet and use a squirt bottle.)
- Do not have sex until treatment prescribed for a vaginal infection has been completed and the infection is resolved.
- 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 cause 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. When getting out of the bath, pat dry, then allow the area to air-dry.
- Current studies indicate that oral and vaginal probiotic supplements do not help treat or prevent vaginal infections.