

### Tips on Avoiding Vaginitis

Vaginitis refers to an inflammation of the vaginal walls. Symptoms include:

- Increased discharge
- Burning
- Itching
- Foul odor
- Pain with intercourse

Most cases are caused by either yeast (typically associated with burning or itching) or a bacterium called Gardnerella (vaginitis from this is also called bacterial vaginosis and typically associated with a “fishy” odor). Although some cases of vaginitis can be sexually transmitted, these two are generally due to an imbalance of the organisms that normally inhabit the vagina. Nearly all women have some yeast and some Gardnerella but these are kept in check by local conditions and the patient’s immune system.

This balance can be upset by:

- Antibiotics that kill some organisms and not others
- Warm, moist conditions brought on by wearing tight clothing or bathing suits
- Abrasion of the vaginal walls due to traumatic intercourse
- Decreased immune response related to medical conditions such as Diabetes and other conditions that may impair the immune system
- Chemical irritants such as deodorants, scents
- Allergens such as new clothing or pads

Maintaining a healthy balance is promoted by:

- Minimizing constricting clothing and time in a bathing suit
- Maintaining normal vaginal bacteria called acidophilus
  - Take a source of acidophilus daily such as yogurt or probiotic tablets (there are a number of oral probiotics including Align, PB 8 and Flor Restore; a vaginal preparation is Lactin-V, available without prescription)
    - These are especially helpful if you are taking an antibiotic
  - Use a “prebiotic”- these are nutrients that promote the growth of acidophilus (one preparation is Luvena Prebiotic- available without prescription)

- Use a vaginal lubricant such as Astroglide Water Based, K-Y or other lubricants (some are sensitive to glycerin and may do better with a water based formulation- look at the ingredients)
- Allow adequate healing after being treated for vaginitis since it may take a few weeks to fully heal even if your symptoms resolve sooner. Do not have intercourse for a few weeks after treatment
- If you are past the menopause and have recurrent vaginitis you may benefit from vaginal estrogen to restore the thickness and moisture to the vaginal walls and improve resistance