



Prevention of Vaginitis and UTIs

Vaginitis:

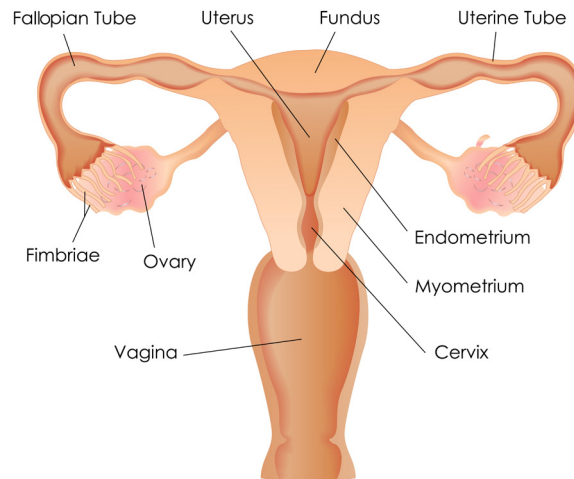
Vaginitis is an inflammation of the vagina that can result in discharge, itching and pain. The cause is usually a change in the normal balance of vaginal bacteria or an infection. Vaginitis can also result from reduced estrogen levels after menopause.

The most common types of vaginitis are:

- **Bacterial vaginosis**, which results from overgrowth of one of several organisms normally present in your vagina
- **Yeast infections**, which are usually caused by a naturally occurring fungus called *Candida albicans*
- **Trichomonas**, which is caused by a parasite and is commonly transmitted by sexual intercourse
- **Vaginal atrophy**, which results from reduced estrogen levels after menopause

Good hygiene may prevent some types of vaginitis and may relieve some symptoms:

- **Avoid baths, hot tubs and whirlpool spas.** Rinse soap from your outer genital area after a shower, and dry the area well to prevent irritation. Don't use scented or harsh soaps, such as those with deodorant or antibacterial action.
- **Avoid irritants.** These include scented tampons, pads, and feminine hygiene products.
- **Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.** Doing so avoids spreading fecal bacteria to your vagina.
- **Don't douche.** Your vagina doesn't require cleansing other than normal bathing. Repetitive douching disrupts the normal organisms that reside in the vagina and can actually increase your risk of vaginal



infection. Douching won't clear up a vaginal infection.

- **Use a condom.** Both male and female condoms may help you avoid infections spread by sexual contact.
- **Wear cotton underwear.** Also wear pantyhose with a cotton crotch. If you feel comfortable without it, skip wearing underwear to bed. Yeast thrives in moist, dark, warm environments.
- **Wear clothing that is comfortable.** Avoid thongs, girdles, tight jeans, and pantyhose.

Urinary Tract Infections:

A Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is an infection that occurs in any part of your urinary system (kidneys, ureters, bladder and/or urethra). Most infections involve the lower urinary tract (bladder and urethra). Women are at greater risk of developing a UTI than men are. Infection limited to your bladder can be painful and annoying. However, serious consequences can occur if a UTI spreads to your kidneys.

Take these steps to reduce your risk of urinary tract infections:

- **Drink plenty of liquids, especially water.** Drinking water helps dilute your urine and ensures that you'll urinate more frequently, allowing bacteria to be flushed from your urinary tract before an infection can begin.
- **Urinate frequently.** If you feel the urge to urinate, don't delay using the toilet.
- **Wipe from front to back.** Doing so after urinating and after a bowel movement helps prevent bacteria in the anal region from spreading to the vagina and urethra.
- **Gently wash the skin around the vagina and anus.** Do this daily, but don't use harsh soaps or wash too vigorously. The delicate skin around these areas can become irritated.
- **Empty your bladder soon after intercourse.** Sex can introduce bacteria into the normally sterile urethra. Urinating flushes away any bacteria that may be lurking near the opening to the urethra.
- **Avoid potentially irritating feminine products.** Using deodorant sprays or other feminine products, such as douches and powders, in the genital area can irritate the urethra.

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