

Vaginal inflammation

Abnormal vaginal discharge may be due to different disorders, or infections. The most common infections are yeast infection and bacterial vaginosis. Most of the yeast infections are caused by *Candida albicans*, a fungus normally present in the vagina but can become a problem when a woman's system is in a state of imbalance, causing the yeast to grow profusely and to be discharged as a white, sticky liquid. Bacterial vaginosis, on the other hand, involves several bacteria which also grow profusely when a woman's system is off balance.

Women of reproductive age are more vulnerable to these occurrences. The amount of discharge might also increase slightly during ovulation, before menstruation and during pregnancy.

A healthy vagina is slightly acidic. The acid maintains a balance among the different germs in the vagina. If the balance is upset, the 'bad' germs may overgrow and cause infection. Pregnancy, diabetes, birth control pills, antibiotics and steroid can upset the vaginal system and increase the risk of vaginal inflammation.

Symptoms of yeast infection include itching, increased amount of vaginal discharge which sometimes causes a burning sensation. Yeast infection can be treated with an antifungal cream or suppository. It usually takes one to two weeks to cure the infection. Recurrent infections may require the antifungal medicine to be taken orally.

The symptoms of bacterial vaginosis are similar to those of yeast infection but the discharge from bacterial vaginosis is smelly. Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial vaginosis.

Proper hygiene may prevent some types of vaginitis from recurring. Wearing cotton underwear and avoiding overly-tight or air-tight trousers such as jeans and nylon trousers may also help prevent vaginitis.