



## **VAGINAL DISCHARGE - Bacterial Vaginosis (BV), Yeast Infection and Trichomoniasis (Trich)**

### **What is bacterial vaginosis (BV)**

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is an overgrowth of the normal vaginal bacteria commonly found in sexually active individuals. BV is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

### **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms can appear and disappear with your period. Symptoms include:

- White or grey vaginal discharge
- Fishy odor from the vagina
- Mild vaginal itching or burning can occasionally occur

### **How do I get tested?**

Swabs are taken from the vagina. BV can be diagnosed by a health care provider based on symptoms.

### **How is it treated?**

BV is treated with antibiotics. If you do not have symptoms, treatment is not necessary unless you are pregnant or are planning to have a gynecological procedure such as an intrauterine device (IUD) insertion or an abortion.

### **How can I prevent bacterial vaginosis?**

Some individual will continue to get BV regularly. However, here are some tips that may help:

- Avoid douching and using other hygiene products such as sprays, scented soaps, tampons and pads
- Using condoms may decrease BV recurrence

### **Are there complications?**

During pregnancy, BV may increase the risk of premature rupture of the membranes, Pre-term delivery and having a low birth weight baby.

### **What is a yeast infection?**

A yeast infection is an overgrowth of normal flora that can be found on the skin, in the gastrointestinal tract from the mouth to the anus and the vagina. A yeast infection

is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Anyone can develop a yeast infection. Yeast infections and having an overgrowth of yeast are not serious conditions.

## **What are the symptoms?**

- White, watery or thick discharge from the vagina
- Vaginal itching and/or soreness
- Redness and/or burning on the vulva
- Burning when urine touches the vulva
- Pain with intercourse
- Red spots with whitish patches or a rash on the glans (head), foreskin and/or shaft of the penis
- Dry, flaky and/or itchy skin of the penis
- Redness, swelling and/or irritation of the genital area

## **How do I get tested?**

If you have a vaginal yeast infection, swabs are taken from the vagina or penis. Yeast infections can be diagnosed by a health care provider based on symptoms, but it is best to have a swab taken to ensure it is not any other infection or STI.

## **How is it treated?**

- Only yeast infection symptoms need to be treated. Overgrowth of yeast is treated with antifungal medication. The following medications can be purchased at pharmacies without a prescription:
  - Vaginal cream, tablets or suppositories inserted in the vagina
  - Antifungal cream that is applied to the genital area
  - Oral medication

## **How can I prevent yeast infections?**

- Avoid douching and using hygiene products such as sprays, scented soaps, tampons or pads, and bath products.
- Avoid clothing that can trap moisture and alter the vaginal environment, such as pantyhose, synthetic underwear and other tight fitting clothing. It is recommended to wear cotton underwear.
- Factors that contribute to yeast infections are hormonal changes (pregnancy, menstruation and birth control pills), diabetes, antibiotics and oral sex.

## **What is trichomoniasis?**

Trichomoniasis vaginalis (also known as trich) is a parasite that can live in the vagina and urethra (opening on the penis). It can survive for a short period of time outside the body.

## How is it transmitted?

Trichomoniasis is transmitted through unprotected vaginal and anal intercourse with an infected partner.

## What are the symptoms?

- Fishy odour
- Frothy yellowish vaginal discharge
- Itching and redness of the vulva and/or vagina
- Burning with urination
- Slight discharge from the penis and discomfort while urinating

## How do I get tested?

- Trichomoniasis is diagnosed by a health care provider based on symptoms; swabs are taken from the vagina or penis to confirm.

## How is it treated?

- Trichomoniasis can be treated and cured with oral antibiotics.
- It is important not to have sexual contact during treatment and for seven days after treatment.
- Make sure that your partner(s) is treated before resuming any sexual activity.
- You can be re-infected after treatment.
- When testing for trichomoniasis, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) must be considered, and additional testing for other STIs should be done.

**Remember:** Any infection in the genital areas may increase the risk of becoming infected with HIV. Practicing safer sex, by using latex or polyurethane condoms and/or oral dams for oral, anal or vaginal sex can reduce the risk of sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs).

Call the **Sexual Health Infoline Ontario** at 1-800-668-2437 if you have questions or need help.

## For more information:

### Sexual Health Centre

179 Clarence Street, Ottawa K1N 5P7

**613-234-4641 TTY: 613-580-9656**

[OttawaPublicHealth.ca](http://OttawaPublicHealth.ca)