

## Vaginal Infections

### *Yeast Infections*

Yeast naturally live in the vagina, but when the pH balance of the vagina is disrupted, yeast can overgrow and cause symptoms of a yeast infection. The majority of infections are caused by *Candida albicans*, however some species of yeast can be present that tend to be resistant to common forms of treatment, such as *Candida glabrata* and *Candida tropicalis*. About 5% of women develop recurrent yeast infections (more than 4 in a 12 month period), and this could be a sign of a more serious medical condition, such as HIV or diabetes.

**Common Causes:** pregnancy, hormonal birth control, menstrual periods, diabetes, stress, being overweight, tight-fitting clothes, douching, impaired immune system, use of scented soaps and feminine hygiene products, poor diet high in sugars and carbohydrates, excessive sweating, and certain medication use, such as antibiotics, allergy medications, and steroids.

**Symptoms:** vaginal itching and discomfort, pain with intercourse, discomfort with voiding and a white, clumpy discharge.

#### **Prescription Treatments:**

- Oral anti-fungal medications (ie. Diflucan)
- Vaginal anti-fungal medications (ie. Terazol or Gynazole)
- Complete entire course of treatment prescribed even if symptoms have resolved; it is best to avoid sex during treatment

### *Bacterial Vaginosis*

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) results from a disruption in the balance of naturally-occurring bacteria found in the vagina. When the vaginal pH increases due to a lack of healthy bacteria, called lactobacilli, organisms that cause BV are more likely to grow and cause infection. Common strains of BV causing organisms include *Gardnerella vaginalis*, *Mycoplasma* species, *Ureaplasma* species, and *Mobiluncus* species. It is important to treat BV because it has been linked to an increased risk of developing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and can lead to complications in pregnancy.

**Common Causes:** hormonal changes, menstrual periods, douching, new sexual partners, smoking, poor hygiene and use of scented hygiene products.

**Symptoms:** vaginal itching and irritation, yellow/green or grayish discharge, fishy odor, pelvic discomfort, pain with intercourse and discomfort with voiding.

#### **Prescription Treatments:**

- Oral antibiotics (ie. Metronidazole, Tindamax or Clindamycin)
- Vaginal antibiotics (ie. MetroGel, Cleocin Ovules or Clindamycin Cream)
- Complete entire course of treatment prescribed even if symptoms have resolved; it is best to avoid sex during treatment

### **Prevention Measures**

- Avoid wearing wet bathing suits or sweaty clothes for too long
- Avoid tight-fitting pants, jeans, thong underwear or panty hose
- Wear cotton underwear
- Avoid douches, feminine hygiene products, perfumed tampons, deodorant pads, bubble bath, or colored/perfumed toilet paper and soaps
- Use gentle, dye-free soaps like Dove or Ivory and avoid strong antibacterial soaps like Zest, Lever 2000 and Irish Spring
- Change tampons frequently
- Wash undergarments in unscented laundry detergent with hot water
- Don't wear underpants to bed at night
- Wipe from front to back after using the bathroom
- Dry off well after showering
- Take Vitamin C 500mg daily
- Eat yogurt with live cultures or take a probiotic daily
- Avoid using scented or lubricated condoms and if using sex toys be sure to clean with soap and hot water after every use
- Avoid lubricants with irritants or chemicals

### **Recurrent Infection Treatments:**

- Low glycemic diet: A large percentage of yeast originates in the gut, and a diet high in starches and sugar encourages yeast over-growth that can lead to vaginal infections.
  - Avoid a diet high in starches and sugar; reference Dr. William Crook's book, Chronic Yeast Diet
- Consider a GI test of intestinal flora to rule out a yeast over-growth
  - Genova GI Panel
- Boric Acid Suppositories (by prescription only)
- Nutritional Supplements with anti-yeast properties and probiotics to restore a healthy vaginal environment and improve digestion
  - Candi-trol (Douglas Lab)
  - Digestzyme-V (Ortho Molecular)
  - Intestin-OL (Ortho Molecular)
  - Ortho Biotic (Ortho Molecular)