



alex ooi & associates
OBGYN CONSULTANTS

Vaginitis, a very common problem for women – what causes it?

“Vaginitis” means inflammation of the vagina usually due to infection by bacteria, yeast or virus. It can occur any time in life but is most common in the childbearing age.

Other factors increasing its likelihood are hormone changes, pregnancy, antibiotics, oral contraceptives, foreign bodies like a forgotten tampon, deodorant, tinted toilet paper, allergies, menopause, wearing of tight underwear especially those of synthetic material or even excess weight and emotional upsets which alter the vagina’s chemical balance.

Occasionally, some infections are by organisms that live in a man’s genitals without causing him any symptoms. This is why your partner may need to be treated and a check for possible sexually transmitted diseases done.

What are the symptoms of vaginitis?

A small amount of clear or slightly white discharge is normally present in any woman and is part of the way in which the vagina cleanses itself. The time to be concerned is when there is a sudden change in the odor, color, consistency [e.g. cheesy] or amount of discharge, particularly if accompanied by intense burning or a burning sensation.

How is vaginitis treated and prevented?

Your gynecologist will determine the cause and prescribe an oral medication, a cream, a vaginal suppository, a douche or a combination. It is common to feel fine quickly but ensure you finish all medications as instructed so as to prevent recurrences. You can reduce chances of getting vaginitis again by:

1. Cleanse daily, but avoid harsh/irritating soaps. Thoroughly clean diaphragms, contraceptive applicators, douching equipment, etc that you may use. Maintain good toilet habits – use clean toilet covers. Organisms that normal live in the rectum can cause vaginitis, so wipe from front to back, away from vagina.
2. **It is very useful to soak 1~2x a week for 10~15 min in clean warm mild salt water – gently inserting a finger to help the saline rise into the vagina and the natural debris there to exit.** Avoid chemicals in feminine hygiene sprays, deodorants, bubble baths, perfumed tampons, and tinted/perfumed toilet tissue as these may be allergenic.
3. Keep vulva dry by avoiding tight underclothing made of synthetic materials, apply talcum powder, use a minipad on days when you have more natural discharge and do not wear a damp bathing suit for prolonged periods.