



If you have any questions or problems,
call your health department
or your health care provider.



Vaginal Discharge



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The Normal Vaginal Discharge

A vaginal discharge does not always mean you have an infection. In fact, a clear or slightly cloudy discharge with little or no odor is normal. The amount of discharge is different for each woman.

Why Is There a Discharge at Certain Times During the Menstrual Cycle?

The amount of the discharge and the way it looks and feels changes during your monthly menstrual cycle. After your period and during most of the month, you may not notice a discharge. The discharge looks cloudy white and feels sticky to the touch. Your vagina may feel dry.

Just before your body releases an egg from your ovary, you may notice more of a discharge. The discharge feels slippery and stretchy to the touch. It looks clear – like raw egg white. Your vagina may feel wet. This discharge is called fertile mucus, and you are more likely to get pregnant if you have sex during this time without using birth control. Pregnancy can also change the mucus discharge. You usually have more of a discharge when you are pregnant. If you use birth control pills, Depo Provera, the Patch or Vaginal Ring, your discharge may not change at all during your cycle.

When the Discharge Is Not Normal

Your vaginal discharge is not normal if there are any of the following signs:

- A bad odor
- Itching or swelling in or around the vagina
- Fever or pain

If you have any of these signs, you may have an infection of the vagina. **See your doctor or nurse immediately!** Itching around the vagina can also be treated with over-the-counter medications.

Staying Healthy

There are several steps you can take that may reduce your chance of having a vaginal infection.

- Wear all-cotton panties.
- Do not wear tight pants.
- Keep the genital area clean and dry.
- Douche **only** if ordered by your health care provider.
- Avoid using feminine hygiene deodorants and sprays, and scented toilet paper or sanitary products.
- Be sure you and your partner are treated if either of you has had a sexually transmitted disease.
- Always use latex or polyurethane condoms in addition to your birth control method to reduce the chance of getting an STD.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Eat one cup of yogurt with active cultures daily.

If an Infection Keeps Coming Back

Some infections are hard to treat and keep coming back. Sometimes when an infection keeps coming back, it is a sign of other health problems.

- You may need to be checked for diabetes.
- If your partner is not circumcised, he could have a yeast infection of the penis (under the foreskin).
- You may need to be checked for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other problems.

Ask your doctor or nurse. She or he can help you decide what to do to get well.

