

Personal Hygiene Tips

- Take a bath or shower every day.
- Brush your teeth twice a day. Good oral health is essential.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Wash the outer genital area daily with mild soap and water.
- Do not use vaginal deodorant sprays or deodorant tampons. They irritate the vagina, which makes it easier for germs to grow inside you.
- Do not use petroleum jelly or oil in your vagina. Contraceptive foam, film, cream, or jelly is safe to use.
- Wash your hands before and after changing your pad or tampon.
- Change your sanitary pad or tampon at least every four hours. Change more often if your flow is heavy.
- NEVER wear a tampon for more than four hours. It is best to wear a pad at night.
- When using a menstrual cup, try to take it out to empty it, wash and dry it every 4-6 hours. Do not wait longer than 12 hours to empty and clean the cup.
- Peeing after sex may help to flush bacteria out of the urethra, thereby helping to prevent a urinary tract infection (UTI). However, peeing after sex will not prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

WOMEN, HYGIENE, & INFECTIONS

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What's Normal?

Vaginal discharge is a mixture of fluid, cells, and bacteria that lubricate and protect the vagina. Normal vaginal discharge changes throughout a woman's monthly cycle. It may be thinner and watery or thick and sticky; it may be clear or white in color. Normal vaginal discharge does not have a strong odor, nor is it associated with itching or pain. Some changes in discharge can reflect infection.

Common Vaginal Infections

Bacterial Vaginosis – an over growth of bacteria in the vagina

Yeast Infections – a fungal infection in the genitals

Trichomoniasis - a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a parasite

Treatment for Infections

If you think that you or your sex partner might have an infection, it is best not to have sex.

Seek medical attention right away. You may need a pelvic exam to find out what kind of infection you have. Your sex partner may also need to be treated.

If you get treated, but your sex partner does not, your infection can come back. An untreated infection can spread in your body and cause more problems. It may prevent you from having children in the future.

You may have a more serious infection if you have the following symptoms: pain in your lower belly, pain in the lower back or pain in your legs, chills or fever, nausea, severe pain during sex. It is important to seek medical attention for these problems.

How to Prevent Infections

- Keep your vagina clean and dry.
- Wear cotton panties or panties with a cotton crotch.
- Avoid tight-fitting jeans and underwear.
- Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement.
- Blot instead of wiping after you urinate.
- Practice safe sex. Use condoms to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.
- Do not douche unless your health care provider tells you to.
- Eat right, exercise, and drink plenty of water.
- Stay healthy. Many women find that they have trouble with infections when their health is poor.

