



VULVOVAGINAL DISORDERS

A PATHWAY TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

TEN SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP THE VULVA AND VAGINA HEALTHY

- 1) *Lay the groundwork.* Eat well; get adequate sleep and exercise regularly to keep all parts of your body healthy.
- 2) *Have smart sex.* Learn the sexual history of your partners and use condoms. STIs (sexually transmitted infections) affect women of all ages.
- 3) *Do not douche.* It is not helpful and it may be harmful to you.
- 4) *Avoid using scented deodorants and perfumes down there.* Routine use of these chemicals can lead to irritation.
- 5) *Do not wear a pad or panty liner every day.* A small amount of vaginal discharge is healthy and normal. If you have troublesome discharge or leakage see your clinician and have it checked.
- 6) *Use tampons wisely.* Choose the right absorbency for the day; change every two to six hours.
- 7) *Bathe right.* Lengthy soaks in very hot water can dry and irritate the skin. So can pure soap such as Ivory®. Best advice- comfortable warm water with a mild soap such as Dove®, Basis® or Neutrogena®. Never scrub the vulva – use just your fingertips.
- 8) *Dry right.* Don't scorch with a hairdryer, just pat dry. Don't use someone else's towels.
- 9) *Loosen up.* Thongs, snap-crotch bodysuits, tight jeans with thick seams, and tight spandex can rub back and forth with exercise. They can trap sweat, leading to irritation, even cracking of the skin. If you do wear any of the items mentioned above, be sure to take breaks every now and then. Avoid wearing wet bathing suits for long periods of time. Consider not wearing underwear or tight pajamas to bed.
- 10) *Keep them clean.* Always wash sex toys and vibrators after every use.

Other resources:

- “The V Book” by Elizabeth G. Stewart, MD
- International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Diseases <http://www.issvd.org/patienteducation.asp>