

# Vaginal Health & Dysbiosis



## DO YOU SELF TREAT YOUR VAGINAL SYMPTOMS?

Lots of women do and you may be treating the wrong condition!

Vaginal health is very dependent on the species of microbes that make up the vaginal microbiome. A healthy vaginal microbiome is dominated by Lactobacilli species which produce lactic acid and hydrogen peroxide which help keep the vaginal pH in the healthy range of 3.8 to 4.2. This inhibits the overgrowth of other bacteria and organisms that can cause vaginal dysbiosis and unpleasant symptoms including itch, discharge, odour, pain on urination and intercourse (Redelinguys et al., 2020).

Many people automatically think these symptoms are thrush (Candida) and self-treat with Canesten. This may work, but can often only give short term relief, or it doesn't work at all.

The problem is that vaginal dysbiosis can be caused by the overgrowth of a number of different bacteria and organisms which have different risk factors and require different treatments so unless you know the cause you may not get a sustainable resolution. The three main causes of vaginitis are:

- Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common of vaginal infections and is associated with an increasing risk of STIs, pelvic inflammatory disease and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Risk factors include low estrogen, smoking, multiple sexual partners, genetic predisposition, menstrual cycle fluctuations and stage of life (Redelinguys et al., 2020).
- Vulvovaginal candidiasis (VVC) is the next most common and is associated with high estrogen, OCP, corticosteroids, diabetes, antibiotics, immune dysfunction and sometimes no risk factors (Jeanmonod, 2021).
- Trichomoniasis accounts for 15-20% and is defined as a sexually transmitted disease.

Other causes include;

- Cytolytic Vaginitis
- Aerobic Vaginitis
- Genitourinary syndrome of menopause

To further complicate this, Candida is not just one organism. Candida albicans is the most common cause of candidiasis (85-90%) but there are other forms of Candida such as Candida glabrata, Candida tropicalis and Candida parapsilosis which are more resistant to standard treatment, so are more likely to recur and may require different treatment protocols (CDC, 2021; Arastehfar et al., 2019).

The other troubling concern is that bacterial vaginosis is treated with antibiotics conventionally but there is now a 50% recurrence at 12 months and the antibiotic therapy can result in vaginal candidiasis and the start of a cycle of mixed infections (Vodstrcil et al., 2021).

## THE GOOD NEWS

We can test your vaginal pH to estimate the type of bacteria that are dominant. It is also possible to do pathology that assesses your microbiome more fully so treatment can be more directed, and it is also possible to modulate the vaginal microbiome utilising probiotics, prebiotics, lifestyle modifications and herbal formulas.

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## CONCLUSION

Please reach out if you want to know more or need some help with your vaginal health



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