Vaginitis

Vaginitis is inflammation of the vagina and can be accompanied by inflammation of the vulva (vulvovaginitis).

What causes vaginitis?

- Bacterial or fungal infections, sexually transmitted diseases, or irritants such as tampons, soaps, gels, or creams can cause vaginitis.

What are symptoms of vaginitis?

- Bacterial overgrowth in the vagina can cause bad-smelling “fishy” discharge and irritation/redness of the vagina/vulva.
- Fungal infection is usually caused by Candida Albicans and can cause intense vaginal itching/discomfort accompanied by thick, white, curdled or cheesy discharge.
- STDs such as Trichomoniasis or Herpes cause differing symptoms with foul smelling discharge, painful intercourse, or vulvovaginal discomfort.

When do you need to call a doctor or nurse practitioner?

- As soon as you experience any of the above symptoms, especially if you experience fever, lower abdominal pain, or irregular bleeding with these symptoms. Only a doctor or nurse practitioner can diagnose what is causing your vaginal symptoms by examining you and performing tests.

How is it treated?

- Depending on the cause of the vaginitis, you may be treated with oral antibiotics, antifungal or antibacterial vaginal gels or creams, or steroid creams. Your sexual partner may also need to be treated in order to avoid reinfection or spreading the infection. Vaginitis caused by irritants are treated by avoiding exposure to the irritant.
What can you do to feel better?

- You should avoid sexual intercourse until you are treated and your doctor or nurse practitioner advises you.
- Bathe with nonirritating, unscented soap and warm water.
- Keep your genital area clean and dry.
- Wear cotton underwear and avoid tight-fitting clothing or pantyhose.
- Do not use sprays, powders, or perfumed sanitary pads or tampons.
- Avoid wiping with baby wipes or scented toilet paper.