

Tips

Tips for shaving pubic hair

- ~ Always use a new razor.
- ~ Do not use aggressive shaving cream intended for men.
- ~ Always pull the skin tight.
- ~ Do not shave against the direction of hairs, to prevent ingrown hairs..

Working when you are menstruating

There are special sponges available that you can use during menstruation to absorb the blood. There are dry and wet sponges.

Tips for using sponges

- ~ Use them once only, do not rinse and reinsert them.
- ~ Never keep them in for more than eight hours.
- ~ Never use natural or household sponges. This is not hygienic and pieces may be left behind in the vagina and cause infections.
- ~ Use more lubricant than usual, since some of it is absorbed by the sponge.
- ~ Always use a condom, even if you have a sponge in. Sponges do not protect you from HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases!

For more information

More information is available at
www.infosexwork.be

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Met dank aan
SOAIDS Nederland

met steun van
de Vlaamse overheid



Dit is een vertaling van
de Nederlandstalige folder
'vaginale hygiëne' naar het Engels.

Vaginal hygiene



The vagina is a vulnerable part of the body, which is highly sensitive to moisture, heat and tight clothing. This leaflet provides some information about what you must do to care for your vagina properly. This is very important, especially if you are a sex worker.

The vagina is the internal part of the female genital organs and is shaped like an elastic tube. The walls of this tube are lined with a mucous membrane which produces natural, healthy mucus. **A healthy vagina cleans itself. The vagina contains the body's own bacteria which keep each other perfectly in balance and suppress harmful viruses, bacteria and fungi.** It is important to avoid disturbing this natural internal environment within the vagina as far as possible.

Vaginal symptoms

Vaginal discharge or white discharge is not the same for every woman and it may change slightly during your cycle. This is perfectly normal. There is a problem, however, if you have:

- ~ a discharge which is different from usual, with a different odour, colour, texture, etc.
- ~ itching, either internally or on the labia
- ~ redness or irritation
- ~ pain, a burning sensation when urinating
- ~ pain during or after sex
- ~ bleeding after sex
- ~ swollen labia
- ~ cuts, ulcers, fissures or splits

Possible cause of symptoms

1) Bacterial vaginal infections or vaginosis

- ~ Not sexually transmissible.
- ~ Caused by a disturbance in the vaginal environment.
- ~ Produces a discharge with a strong fishy odour.
- ~ Usually recovers spontaneously.
- ~ Should not be treated by rinsing, since that only makes the problem worse.
- ~ Consult a doctor if symptoms persist.

2) Candida or fungal infection

- ~ Not a sexually transmitted disease.
- ~ Occurs in many people and may grow more quickly under certain conditions, for example when it is wrongly treated, when your resistance is lowered, in times of stress, when you take antibiotics, etc.
- ~ Causes a white, crumbly or watery discharge, itching and pain.
- ~ Treated with a vaginal cream or tablets available on prescription. .

NB: The cream is greasy and damages condoms. It is best only to use the cream before you go to sleep and to rinse the vagina with water before you start working.

3) A sexually transmitted disease

- ~ This disease may cause symptoms as described above, but often causes no symptoms at all.

To prevent symptoms

- ~ Wash your vagina only with lukewarm water.
- ~ Do not use soap or products containing soap.
- ~ Avoid excessive use of commercially available agents such as Lactacyd. Only use these occasionally.
- ~ To avoid infections, many women rinse the vagina using products that are available without a prescription, such as Iso-Betadine for gynaecological purposes, Dettol or Savlon. These products have a harmful effect on the vagina, the mucous membrane and acidity levels. They can actually result in more infections and more complications.
- ~ Do not wash your vagina after every customer; a healthy vagina can clean itself.
- ~ Do not dry yourself too vigorously, just dab dry.
- ~ Use a lubricant that is water-based rather than greasy. Beware of massage oil!
- ~ Use a condom.
- ~ Do not use panty liners except during your period. They increase the risk of fungal infections.
- ~ Synthetic underwear, G-strings and tight-fitting trousers cause vaginal infections. Wear cotton underwear as much as possible and choose trousers that are not tight. Change into these clothes as soon as possible after work.
- ~ Do not switch from anal sex directly to vaginal sex.
- ~ Do not share sex toys or, if you do, use a condom.
- ~ If symptoms persist, consult a doctor.
- ~ Do not try to treat yourself.