



HEALTH UPDATE

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CYTOLYTIC VAGINOSIS

What is it?

- A vaginal condition that involves an overgrowth of lactobacillus. This bacterium is part of the normal vaginal environment. Cytolytic vaginosis is not an infection.

What causes this to happen?

- Sometimes we don't know.
- Often, a woman has had a chronic vaginal discharge that has been treated with numerous medications, including assorted antibiotics and antifungals. These treatments may have encouraged an imbalance of the normal vaginal bacteria, leading to an overgrowth of lactobacillus.

What are some common symptoms of cytolytic vaginosis?

- Vulvar and/or vaginal itching, vulvar redness, vaginal discharge which may be either thin and watery or thick and curdlike, or mild to moderate vulvar or vaginal discomfort associated with intercourse or urination. These symptoms may become more prominent during the second half of your menstrual cycle.

Is this a sexually transmitted disease?

- No.

How is it treated?

- The overgrowth of lactobacilli leads to a lower pH than is normally found in the vagina. Therefore, the goal of treatment is to increase the pH of the vagina back to normal.
- Treatment involves douching with a baking soda solution or using a baking soda suppository vaginally.

1. How to treat using a baking soda douche:

- a. Mix 1-2 tablespoons of baking soda with 4 cups of warm water. A douche bag, which can be purchased at most pharmacies, is then used to infiltrate the vagina with the solution. Or, you can purchase baking soda douches over the counter at most pharmacies.
 - Douche twice weekly for two weeks.
- b. Alternatively, if douching would be difficult due to lack of private bathroom facilities, fill empty gelatin capsules with baking soda and insert one capsule intravaginally, twice weekly for two weeks. Gelatin capsules can be purchased at health food stores.

2. To alleviate vulvar symptoms:

Make a watery paste with baking soda and apply to the vulva on a clean cloth or pad as needed.

How will I know if I am cured?

- If your symptoms resolve with treatment, we assume that the normal vaginal environment has been restored.
- If your symptoms persist or worsen beyond 2-3 weeks after initiating treatment, return for re-evaluation.

What else can I do to help this imbalance resolve and to make myself feel better?

- Consider abstinence from sexual activity until symptoms subside.
- Routine hygiene:
 - After using the toilet, always wipe from front to back;
 - Do not use soap on the vulva but rinse with copious amounts of warm water;
 - Change out of wet swimwear or exercise apparel as soon as possible;
 - Avoid using vaginal sprays, powders, or tampons that are perfumed.
- Cotton underwear.
- Loose-fitting clothing.
- No underwear while sleeping.