

Is it really a yeast infection?

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When women and adolescent girls develop symptoms of irritation, burning or vaginal discharge that is different from 'normal' discharge, they most often think it's due to a yeast infection. So they purchase an anti-yeast infection cream, use it for several days and the symptoms subside.

Now consider the woman who has irritation, burning, discharge and discomfort, and thinking she has a yeast infection, purchases an antifungal cream. Although she uses the cream correctly for the appropriate amount of time, her symptoms don't go away. Using another, stronger cream still doesn't help. Now what?

The truth is a woman correctly diagnoses the reason for her symptoms in such cases only half of the time. That means 50 percent of the time a woman will have wasted time and continued suffering needlessly by misdiagnosing her own condition. In addition, the ineffective medication she used to try treating her condition might mask the signs of the true problem, making diagnosis more difficult when she finally visits her health care provider.

The fact is yeast infection is only one of the many causes of itching, burning or discharge. Other vaginal conditions to blame for similar symptoms include bacteria (bacterial vaginosis), protozoans (trichomoniasis) and viruses (herpes virus types). Hormonal changes, allergies or irritations caused by chemicals found in detergent products, for example, also could be the culprits.

Women who douche frequently use highly fragrant soap or use 'vaginal cosmetics' such as foam, cream or vaginal scents are susceptible to symptoms that mimic those of yeast infection.

Sometimes a woman forgets to remove the tampon at the end of a menstrual period, and after a few days begins to experience itching and discharge. When that occurs, if she treats herself with an antifungal medication, she not only has delayed proper treatment, but also puts herself in danger of infection. If the infection moves into her uterus and tubes, the woman could develop pelvic inflammatory disease.

Women, remember all vaginal irritation is not caused by yeast. Fifty-fifty odds of accurate self-diagnosis and treatment are not worth the prolonged discomfort and danger of being wrong. Diagnosis by your physician is key to correct treatment.

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