Vaginitis is anything that causes inflammation of the vagina. The most common vaginal infections are candida vaginitis and bacterial vaginosis. Candida vaginitis, commonly called a yeast infection, is caused by fungi. Occasionally, the fungi which are naturally present in the vagina, can overgrow and cause symptoms. A common trigger is recent antibiotic use which kills off natural bacteria and allows the fungi to overgrow. Bacterial vaginosis is also caused by an overgrowth of naturally-present microbes, in this case bacteria. This happens when the vaginal pH balance is upset. It can be difficult to distinguish the two causes of vaginitis without a physical exam.

**DIAGNOSIS**
Your provider will ask you about your symptoms and will do a physical exam. You or your provider may also collect a swab of your vaginal discharge.

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<th>CAUSE</th>
<th>SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>TREATMENT</th>
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| **CANDIDA VAGINITIS** | Overgrowth candida yeast | • Itching/burning of vagina and surrounding skin  
• Swelling and redness of skin surrounding vagina  
• Thick, white discharge that may look like cottage cheese  
• Burning with urination or sexual intercourse | Over-the-counter vaginal antifungal cream such as clotrimazole (Monistat) or prescription pill, fluconazole (Diflucan) |
| **BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS** | Overgrowth bacteria | • Gray, frothy, foul-smelling vaginal discharge  
• Itching around vaginal opening  
• Burning with urination | Antibiotics (oral or vaginal) |

Other considerations:
- If your period begins while using intra-vaginal medications, continue using the medication but do not use tampons until you complete your treatment.
- If using oral antibiotics for bacterial vaginosis treatment, do not consume alcohol during the treatment period.

**RESOURCES**
- FamilyDoctor.org [https://familydoctor.org/is-it-a-cold-or-the-flu/](https://familydoctor.org/is-it-a-cold-or-the-flu/)
- CDC [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/)

**RISK FACTORS**
- Menstruation
- Pregnancy
- Medications: Antibiotics, steroids
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Constant moisture or irritation of the vagina
- Douching
- Having new or multiple sex partners

**PREVENTION**
- Avoid douching, feminine hygiene sprays, deodorants or bubble bath.
- Wash the vulva regularly with mild soap and water, rinse well, and dry thoroughly.
- Wear cotton underwear, avoid tight-fitting clothing and change pads and tampons regularly.
- Do not sit in wet swimsuit or damp clothes.
- Limit number of sexual partners. Use condoms, counters and doorknobs with antibacterial disinfectant.