Self care
Care for your private parts or genital area by following these practices:

- Wipe from front to back, away from the vagina, and toward your anus.
- Keep your genital area clean by rinsing with warm water and gently patting it dry.
- Do not use a loofah or washcloth on your genitals. Use your fingertips only.
- Do not use perfumed soaps or liquid soap on your genitals. Use a gentle bar soap, like Dove for sensitive skin or Neutrogena.
- Do not use pads that have deodorant or a plastic coating.
- Do not use tampons that have deodorant.
- Do not use douches, feminine sprays, or talcum powder.
- Do not wear tight fitting pants or underwear. Wear only cotton underwear.
- Do not use pads or tampons that contain a deodorant or a plastic coating.
- Do not wear panty hose or tights unless they have a cotton crotch.

Pubic Hair Protects - Don’t Shave It
Pubic hair protects your genital area from dirt, bacteria, and viruses. It also prevents chafing from areas that rub together.

Vaginal discharge
Most women have vaginal discharge. It keeps your vagina clean and moist. Normal discharge is clear, white, or yellow in color and has a mild odor. You may have a few days of heavy, clear, and slippery discharge about halfway between your periods when your egg is released.

Common vaginal infections
- **Candidiasis** (yeast infection) is caused by the overgrowth of yeast normally found in the vagina. The overgrowth of yeast in the vagina can cause discharge, itching, or burning. This is not a sexually transmitted infection.
- **Bacterial vaginosis (BV)** is caused by a change in the balance of normal bacteria present in the vagina. The discharge is thin and watery and may look gray, white, or yellow. It has a bad or fishy smell. This infection is more common in women who are sexually active, but it is not sexually transmitted.
- **Trichomoniasis** is caused by a parasite, and it is sexually transmitted. Most often symptoms happen 5 to 28 days after infection, but many people do not have symptoms. Women may see yellow, green, or gray discharge from the vagina, itching in or near the vagina, and vaginal odor. Antibiotic treatment is needed for you and your partner(s).

Signs of vaginal infection
Follow self care practices to decrease your chance of vaginal infections and see your provider if you have any signs of infection, including:

- Changes in vaginal discharge
- Itching or burning around the vagina
- Painful sexual intercourse
- Burning when you urinate
- Foul vaginal odor
Sexually transmitted infections

There are other habits that can help prevent vaginal infections caused by sexual activity. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections most often spread from person to person through intimate sexual contact. Unprotected vaginal, oral, or anal sex, or genital touching with an infected person puts you at risk.

Often signs in women are the same as a yeast infection or urinary tract infection. Sometimes there are no signs of infection.

Protect against sexually STIs, including HIV, by using a condom every time you have intercourse.

Contact your health care provider

If you have any of the signs listed or notice a change in your vaginal discharge or the way your vagina smells or feels, contact your health care provider.

Getting your annual female exam and other screenings will also help you know sooner if you have an infection and get treatment as soon as possible.