

Every person is different. Learn what is normal for you.

# Tips for a Healthy Vagina.

## Vagina or Vulva? What's the difference?

### The Vagina (inside part)

- Your vagina is the inside part of your genitals. You can see the opening only.
- Blood flows out of the vagina when you have your period.
- There is natural bacteria in your vagina that keeps it healthy and clean.

**The vagina is an amazing part of your body that cleans itself!**

- Everyone has a different smell. This is healthy and normal.
- Between periods, the vagina stays healthy and protects itself by making fluid, called “discharge”.
- Normal discharge can be clear, cloudy white or creamy.
- Sometimes there is more discharge than other times such as when you feel “turned on” (sexually aroused).

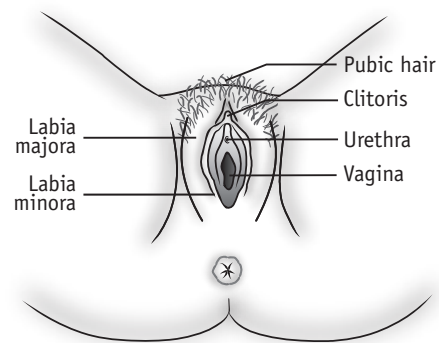
### The Vulva (outside part)

Your vulva is the outside part of your genitals.

Your vulva has:

- Pubic hair
- Labia majora (outer lips)
- Clitoris
- Labia minora (inner lips)
- Urethra (where you pee from)
- Opening to the vagina

**Your vulva is the part that you gently clean.**



## Your vagina does not need a lot of cleaning. Here are some tips for keeping it healthy:

### General Care

- Change out of damp clothes like bathing suits, workout/yoga pants as soon as you can.
- Wash your vulva with plain water after having a bubble bath or hot tub.
- Do not use perfumes, powders or sprays on your vulva or in your vagina.
- Do not use scented products on your vulva or in your vagina.

### Cleaning

You do not need special wipes or cleaners for your vulva and vagina. Save your money and follow these tips instead:

- Clean your vulva after you pee (urinate) or poo (have a bowel movement) by wiping with toilet tissue from front to back.
- Wash your vulva with warm, not hot, water and mild, unscented soap to get rid of sweat. You cannot wash away an infection.
- Do not wash your vulva too much. Once a day with mild soap is good enough.
- Do not scrub your vulva with a washcloth or loofah. Only use your hand.
- Do not clean the inside of your vagina. Do not douche. This changes the normal, healthy bacteria in your vagina.



## Pubic Hair

Pubic hair is healthy and normal. Removing your pubic hair by shaving or waxing may increase your risk for skin infections.

## Underwear

- Wear cotton underwear, it breathes better.
- Change underwear once a day.
- Do not sleep with your underwear on.
- Limit wearing thong underwear. If you do wear a thong, take it off when you get home. Do not wear a thong to sleep.

## Tampons/Pads

- Use pads and tampons only when you have your period.
- Change tampons/pads when full and at least every 4–6 hours.
- Do not use scented pads or tampons.

## Sex

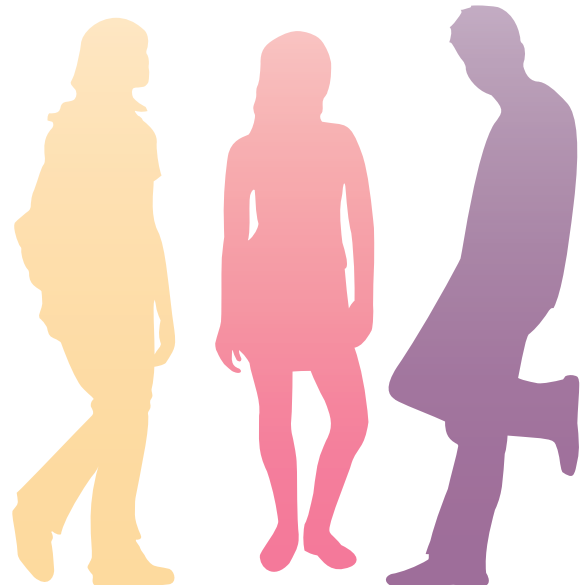
Sex can increase your risk for infections. Follow these tips to avoid getting bacteria that could cause an infection into your urethra and vagina:

- Wash your hands before and after touching your own or someone else's genitals.
- Try to pee before and right after having sex or using sex toys.
- Do not switch fingers, toys or a penis between the anus and your vagina.
- Do not share sex toys. Follow directions for proper cleaning.
- Change condoms between anal and vaginal sex.

## Lube is Good!

Using lube can help make sex feel even better and lowers the risk of a condom breaking.

- Use water or silicone based lube.
- Limit use of flavoured lube and condoms (chemicals and sugars). Rinse your vulva with water after use.
- Do not use oil based lube. It is harder for the vagina to clean out the oil and it breaks latex condoms.
- Do not use spermicide, stuff that kills sperm, because it is harsh on the skin of your vagina.



## Visit a clinic if:

- It hurts to pee.
- It hurts to have sex.
- Your vulva is itchy or burning.
- Your discharge/fluid smell changes
- You have a bump, rash or sores on your vulva.

Visit the clinic if you use a cream or some other medicine to help with these problems and they do not go away.

For a list of youth clinics visit: [www.vch.ca/youthclinics](http://www.vch.ca/youthclinics)



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