Personal Hygiene Tips

- Wash the outer genital area daily with mild soap and water.
- Do not use vaginal deodorant sprays or products such as deodorant tampons. They irritate the vagina, which makes it easier for germs to grow inside you.
- Do not use petroleum jelly or oil in your vagina. Contraceptive foam, film, cream, or jelly is safe to use.
- Take a tub bath or shower every day.
- Wash your hands before and after changing your pad or tampon.
- During your period change your sanitary pad or tampon at least every four hours. Change more often if your flow is heavy.
- NEVER wear a tampon for more than four hours. It is best to wear a pad at night.
- If you use a menstrual cup, try to take it out to empty it and wash and dry it every 4-6 hours. Do not wait longer than 12 hours to empty and clean the cup.

For more information

Contact: _____

Telephone: _____

D H E C

PROMOTE PROTECT PROSPER

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

www.scdhec.gov

We promote and protect the health of the public and the environment.

ML-005002 8/2010

Women, Hygiene & Infections

D H E C

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What's Normal?

It is normal for a woman to have a vaginal discharge that changes throughout the woman's monthly cycle. It increases and becomes clear and a little stretchy around the time of ovulation (when the egg is released). Before a woman's period starts, at the end of the menstrual cycle, the discharge is thicker and the amount may be less.

Signs of Possible Infections

Remember the word ***BODIES*:**

Burning during urination

Odor different from normal

Discoloration (redness) around vagina

Itching

Excessive or **unusual** discharge
(greenish, yellow, brown, off-white, or bloody)

Sexual intercourse is painful

Men and women do not always have signs of infections.

WARNING: You may have a more serious infection if you have the following symptoms: pain in your lower belly, pain in the lower back or pain in your legs, chills or fever, nausea, severe pain during sex. It is important to seek medical attention for these problems.

Treatment for Infections

If you think that you or your sex partner might have an infection, it is best not to have sex.

Seek medical attention right away. You may need a pelvic exam to find out what kind of infection you have. Your sex partner may also need to be treated.

If you get treated, but your sex partner does not, your infection can come back. An untreated infection can spread in your body and cause more problems. It may prevent you from having children in the future.

How to Prevent Infections

- Wear cotton panties or panties with a cotton crotch.
- Wear panty hose with a cotton crotch.
- Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement.
- Blot instead of wiping after you urinate.

- Have your partner use condoms to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.
- Do not douche unless your health care provider tells you to.
- Take care of yourself and stay healthy. Many women find that they have trouble with infections when their health is poor.