

# Normal Vaginal Fluids

It is normal and natural to have fluids coming out of the vagina. Sometimes they are called secretions or discharge. There are different types.

## Cervical mucus

This mucus is made in the cervix, the opening to the uterus (womb). It looks different depending on where a woman is in her menstrual cycle. During her most fertile time, it is slippery, clear and stretchy. Just before her period, it is sticky. If she is taking birth control pills, it will probably always just be sticky. Mucus usually dries white or yellow on the underwear. Girls usually start to notice this during puberty. There will be less cervical mucus as a woman gets closer to menopause.

## Lubrication

Glands near the opening of the vagina produce this fluid. It appears when a woman is sexually excited. Lubrication helps a woman enjoy sexual activity. Sometimes women may need extra lubrication (e.g., during breastfeeding or before and after menopause). Water-based lubricants are available at pharmacies or Sexual Health Clinics.

## Female ejaculation

Some women ejaculate when they have an orgasm (come). There is usually a lot of clear fluid that comes out of the urethra where urine (pee) normally comes out. However, this fluid is not urine; it has no odour and does not leave a stain.



## Care

Your vagina cleans itself. As fluids pass through it, old cells are flushed out. You do not need to douche, use feminine hygiene spray or wash with soap inside the vagina. These products are not necessary to keep the vagina clean. In fact, they can irritate the delicate lining of the vagina. Wash the outside of the genitals. A shower or bath is all that is needed. Using condoms during intercourse will help to prevent Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

## Problems

It is important to know what your normal secretions look like and smell like. If there is a change in the appearance or odour, get it checked out. You may have a vaginal infection or an STD.

### **See your doctor or go to a Sexual Health Clinic if:**

- the fluid coming out of your vagina looks or smells different than usual
- you bleed after intercourse or see blood between periods
- you have vaginal itching
- it burns when you urinate (pee)

Other info sheets in this series:  
Avoiding bladder infections  
Avoiding vaginal infections  
Avoiding vaginal yeast infections  
Dealing with bacterial vaginosis

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AIDS and Sexual Health InfoLine  
416-392-2437  
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