Understanding your vaginal swab results

Vaginal swabs are taken to test for infections. You may have a vaginal swab if you have abnormal vaginal discharge, vaginal or pelvic pain, or irregular bleeding.

You may also have one as part of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) check-up.

If you're having an STI check-up, you'll usually have two swabs taken. The second swab is to test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. You may be able to take the swabs yourself.

Possible results

Normal vaginal flora: This means there were no signs of infections from your swab.

You might also get some other results.

Chlamydia not detected: This means that you don't have chlamydia.

Neisseria gonorrhoea DNA not detected: This means that you don't have gonorrhoea.

Bacterial vaginosis (BV): All women naturally have some bugs (bacteria) in their vagina – this is normal and healthy. Bacterial vaginosis means that some of the normal bugs have grown more than others, upsetting the natural balance. It can cause a smelly discharge. Bacterial vaginosis isn't sexually transmitted.

Candidiasis: This is commonly called thrush. Thrush can cause a white vaginal discharge and make your vagina itchy and uncomfortable. It's caused by a fungal infection, which is common during pregnancy and after you've had antibiotics. It isn't sexually transmitted.

Trichomonas vaginalis (TV): Trichomonas is a sexually transmitted infection, which can cause vaginal discharge and discomfort.

Next steps

If you have bacterial vaginosis but no symptoms, you may not need any treatment as it can get better on its own. But if you have symptoms, you'll be treated with an antibiotic.

If your results show candidiasis (thrush), you'll be treated with an antifungal cream that you apply to your vagina with an applicator, antifungal tablets, or a combination of the two.

If you have trichomonas, chlamydia, or gonorrhoea you'll be treated with antibiotics for one week. Your sexual partner should be treated at the same time.

Talk to your GP or practice nurse if you have any questions about your vaginal swab.

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