Summer Bacterial Infections & How to Avoid Them
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Warm weather is finally here! It’s time for backyard barbecues, summer salads and pool parties. But before you sit in that wet swimsuit all day, don’t forget to think about your health—the health of your female organs, that is.

Warm Weather Means More Infections

Warm weather can make areas like the armpits, vagina and breasts sweat, which can increase the risks for yeast and bacterial infections. These infections are common in many areas of the body, including the skin, thanks to a mixed flora of different bacteria.

A Little More About Bacteria

Bacteria in itself is not necessarily bad. There are many bacteria in our large intestines that help us digest food and keep us healthy. The study of probiotics, or “good” bacteria, is a growing field focused on truly keeping us well instead of merely treating disease. Probiotics naturally occur in some foods such as yogurt, or can be taken in the form of a tablet supplement. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about more probiotics if you think it’s right for you. It’s not about “good” or “bad” bacteria anymore, it’s more about maintaining a balance of naturally occurring bacteria.

Bacteria & Feminine Hygiene

The vagina has at least 10 different bacteria and a small amount of yeast, and that’s normal. It’s when there’s an overgrowth of the bacteria Gardnerella combined with vaginal symptoms, you get diagnosed with bacterial vaginosis. Alternatively, when there is an overgrowth of the yeast Candida species, you get diagnosed with a skin or vaginal yeast infection.

Other Risks for Infection

- Inadequate treatment of chronic medical conditions can also increase the risk of infections
- Uncontrolled blood sugars increase the risk of all types of yeast infections in diabetes patients
- Severely overweight women are also more likely to get yeast infections in skin folds and under the breasts
Try to improve these conditions as much as possible with healthy eating, exercise, and good sleep habits. Additionally, women with changing hormones or immune systems are more likely to develop and hold onto infections longer.

**Pregnancy, Menopause & Infection**

Pregnancy, breastfeeding and the menopausal period are times when women are at higher risk for infection, but most particularly in the vaginal and bladder areas. This is the time when estrogen is relatively low, leaving the tissues vulnerable.

If dryness causes you discomfort, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about both natural and medicinal solutions.

**Tips for Avoiding Summertime Infections**

- Go to the bathroom after intercourse to avoid urinary tract infections if you are susceptible
- Use a good razor and shaving gel when shaving armpit and pubic hair
- Avoid douching and or the application of excessive fragrant creams to the pelvic areas
- When it comes to infection, moisture can often be the culprit. When swimming, try to avoid sitting around afterwards in a wet swimsuit.
- After exercising, try to shower and pat dry as soon as you can.
- Dress in layers so the areas under your breasts can stay as dry as possible, which is a concern particularly for larger breasted women.

This summer, try to keep your skin and female organs healthy. It’s not just about avoiding that dreaded yeast infection, it’s about keeping the flora in balance—then you can work on balancing the rest of your life. Happy summer!