

### Not again!

Do you ever suffer from severe intimate itching or burning, or even swelling at times?

This problem usually occurs as a result of a vaginal infection such as vaginosis or candidiasis.

You are not alone! These infections affect around 75% of women at least once during their lifetime, with half of these women going on to have a second episode.



“ My name is **Naomi**,  
I'm 23 and I feel a constant  
**#Itch.**”

### The vagina is an ecosystem

Good intimate health involves maintaining the right vaginal conditions to prevent symptoms occurring and to allow a sexual relationship to be enjoyed throughout all stages of life.

The vagina is an ecosystem which harbours a wide variety of micro-organisms, the most abundant being lactobacilli. Their presence is beneficial, they produce lactic acid and other antimicrobial compounds which prevent the proliferation of bacteria. Infections can appear when this equilibrium becomes unbalanced.

### Even though nothing has changed?

Perhaps you haven't even realised, you may have taken antibiotics or other long term medication (for example corticosteroids), or you may have overused hygiene products which alter the natural pH of the area.

Maybe you have undergone hormonal changes: pregnancy, menopause? Or maybe you have been taking contraceptives or suffer from an illness such as diabetes... All these factors, together or individually, can alter the vaginal ecosystem and enable an infection to develop.

### You should know:

- ➔ Cotton underwear is best. Synthetic material often increases sweating, even more so in summer. Only use panty liners if really necessary.
- ➔ Sexual activity is not recommended during an infection. Although these are not sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the usual sense of the word, it is possible to pass on an infection during sex. Furthermore it will definitely be painful and your infection will take longer to resolve.
- ➔ Although these infections generally do not have any consequences, it is important for treatment to be given under the care of the Gynaecologist who can monitor your condition.
- ➔ Do not use excessive soap or gel in the shower as these destroy the natural vaginal flora.

### How can I keep vaginal infections at bay?

- Look out for symptoms! Unusual discharge (thicker, white or greyish), an unpleasant odour, burning or stinging on passing urine or when having sex can all be related symptoms.
- Tablets, creams or vaginal suppositories? This type of infection can be treated with different forms of antifungal or antibacterial medication. The one selected is different in each case and depends on the seriousness of the infection, you should therefore consult a gynaecologist. Never treat yourself, it is a habit that should be avoided, even if you are on holiday.
- Avoid humidity: in summer, do not keep your wet swimsuit on for too long or spend long periods of time in the swimming pool or Jacuzzi.
- Take probiotics: introduce products rich in lactobacillus, such as yoghurt, into your diet, these encourage the growth of intestinal and vaginal flora. Sometimes probiotic treatment can also be given vaginally. At HC Marbella we can advise you on which is the best treatment for you.