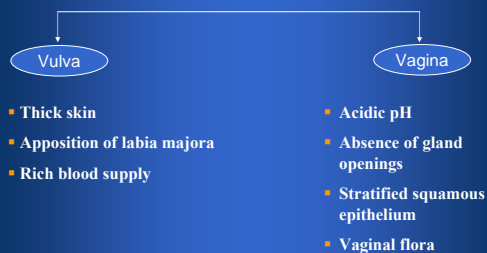


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Douching & Hygiene

By
Abdel-Latif G. El-Kholy

Natural defense mechanisms



Derangement of vaginal microenvironment may occur during:

- Childhood & adolescence
- Postmenopausal
- Douching
- Feminine hygienic sprays, soaps, bubble baths...etc.
- Antibiotic abuse
- Diabetes mellitus
- Vaginal infection

- Is there a normal vaginal discharge?
- Criteria of normal vaginal discharge.
- Conditions with increased vaginal discharge.
 - Ovulation
 - Sexual excitement
- What signs might be indicative of a problem?
 - ↑ Vaginal discharge
 - Change in color or smell
 - Irritation, itching or burning in &/or around the vagina

VAGINAL DOUCHING

- Ancient practice.
- Definition:

Rinsing or clearing out the vagina by squirting water or other solutions into the vagina, through a tubing into the vagina, for hygienic purposes.



Epidemiology

- Limited local surveys.
- CDC: 27% of women (15-44 yrs) douche regularly.
- Rosenberg et al. [1991]: 59-73% of women ever douched at some time.
- Strong underlying cultural component.

Distribution: ↑ among

- Black race
- Lower SES
- Married, parous women
- Women with previous preterm birth

(Zhang et al., 1997)

Source of information:

- 96% → commercials
- 66% → from someone who douches

Varieties:

(1) Douche can: safest & best



(2) Syringe or whirling spray:

Rubber bulb of 300 ml capacity attached to a rigid nozzle. A flange on the nozzle may be present to obstruct the vulva to allow the vagina to distend (esp. in contraception)

Disadv.: ↑ pressure → force fluid & air → uterus & peritoneal cavity
→ risk of air embolism



Fluids used:

- Warm water or normal saline.
- 0.5% lactic acid in water.
- 1% NaHCO₃ in water: adv. & disadv.
- Antiseptics: e.g., povidone-iodine
- Vinegar & water.
- Baking soda.
- Others: H₂O₂, boric acid, commercial preps.
- Hot douches: 40-43°C.

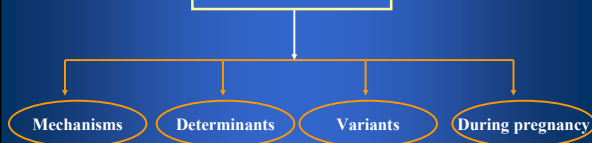
Positions

- Most efficient when the woman lies flat in a bath
- Most practical while she sits on a WC, bidet or bedpan.
- For the bedridden attended by nurse: lateral decubitus is best, dorsal also possible.

Why do women douche?

- **Hygiene & cleanliness:** most frequent reason.
- Remove odor, blood or excessive vaginal discharge, eg: with pessaries, vaginitis, chronic cervicitis or malignancy.
- Precoital: NaHCO_3
- Contraception.
- Please male partner.
- Before going to a doctor, or.....
- As a line of treatment: BV, vulvovaginitis in children & adolescents.
- Comatosed patients.
- Genital fistulae.
- Pre & postoperatively.

Health Hazards

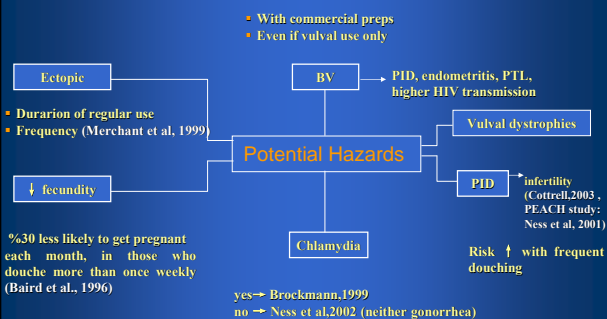


Mechanisms

- Irritation of the vulva & vagina by chemicals
- Disturb vaginal ecosystem
- Spread infection into UGT

Determinants

- Product used
- Frequency & duration
- Relation to sexual activity & menses



Douching during pregnancy

↑ PTL

- Due to infection or douching itself (Bruce et al., 2002)
- Especially if:
 - more than once weekly
 - more than 10 yrs (Fiscella et al., 2002)

↑ LBW

Mostly related to infection as a trigger for douching.

Why do women continue to douche?

Aggressive advertisement by feminine hygienic manufacturers. These will resist attempts to curtail their sales

No public position taken on the issue of douching by bodies as FDA, ACOG, AAP

How to keep the vagina clean?

- **NORMAL** woman does **NOT** need to wash out the vagina at anytime.
- Healthiest & safest → let the vagina clean itself.
- After toilet, clean from front to back.
- Use cotton underpants → cotton allows the genital area to **breathe**.
- Avoid tight pants, swimming suits for long periods.

▪ At any sign of irritation, think of:

- Laundry detergent or fabric softener → stop or change
- Latex in condoms & diaphragms → stop or change
- Colored or perfumed toilet paper → stop
- Deodorant pads, tampons, bubble baths → stop
- Bath or shower daily. Pat the genital area dry
- Cleansing the vulva & outside areas of the vagina is best done using warm water or normal saline, possibly gentle unscented soap.



Thank you...