The FERTILITY SUITE

Our Top Tips for Supporting Your Vaginal Microbiome

The vagina has its own distinct environment which differs from the other microbiomes in the body. The make up of the microbiome in the vagina plays a role in reproductive and maternal health. Dysbiosis of the environment can play a large role in infertility, frequent miscarriage, endometriosis, pre-term birth, frequent urinary tract infections, bacterial vaginosis and vaginismus. A lactobacillus dominant vaginal microbiome has also been linked to improved IVF outcome and therefore its worth investing in improving your vaginal microbiome at least a few months before commencing IVF.

Look after your Nutrition!

Sugary and processed foods will feed all the pathogenic bacterias that can live in the vagina. They can alter the environment of the vagina from its nice safe protective acidic environment to a more hostile alkali one so looking after your diet is key! Avoiding excessive simple carbohydrates, and excessive alcohol intake may restore the microbiome,

Favourite 'good' bacteria foods are:

- Flaxseed powder
- Fermented foods such as kefir, kimchi and kombucha
- All berries, blueberries,raspeberries etc
- Broccoli
- Artichokes, onions, leeks, chives and garlic
- A diverse mix of fruit and vegetables both raw and cooked

Hygiene Practice Tips!

When considering vaginal dysbiosis, it is also important to consider other ways of cross-contamination, such as the gut and urinary microbiomes, and the oral, vaginal, penile microbiomes of sexual partners, which may mean further investigations or hygiene practices to prevent re-infection. Here are some things to consider!

- Avoid perfumed sprays and douches as chemicals can disturb the microbiome and alter the pH of the vagina.
- Avoid the use of G-string underwear as the contact between the anus and the vagina may aid the migration of bacteria.
- Choose breathable natural fibres to improve air flow in the area.
- After using the toilet, wipe away from the vagina. Change tampons and vaginal cups after bowel movements.
- Sterilise vaginal cups by boiling instead of only washing them out in cold water. Having two is good practice.
- Avoid using soap in the vagina, wash with water only.

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▫ Be aware that antibiotics can impact the vaginal microbiome. Whilst taking antibiotics, consider using lactobacillus probiotics & eating fermented foods.
▫ Choose lubricants that are unscented. Oils such as coconut and almond can be used (not when using a condom as it may cause the rubber to perish) Water based and silicone-based lubricants are both available.
▫ Clean sex toys between use and try to avoid using vaginally and anally without first cleaning to prevent cross contamination.
▫ Cigarette smoking directly secretes nicotine into the vagina and impacts negatively on the vaginal microbiome.
▫ Saliva and semen can both alkalise the vagina which may worsen symptoms of BV and other conditions associated with a lack of acidity.
▫ Avoid anal sex as this may allow transmission of certain faecal bacteria such as Enterococcus Faecalis, for example from the large bowel into the vagina which can cause inflammation.
▫ If possible avoid tampons and use organic unbleached cotton tampons and pad

Signs & symptoms that it maybe worth investing in a vaginal microbiome test!

▫ Recurrent infections such as thrush, Bacterial vaginosis (BV) or cystitis
▫ Recurrent unsuccessful IVF where no other cause can be identified
▫ Recurrent miscarriage that cannot be explained
▫ 'Unexplained Infertility'
▫ Symptoms of vaginal itching, redness, irritation, abnormal discharges such as ones that are discoloured or smelly

Consider the use of a good vaginal probiotic, ideally one that is dominant in Lactobacillus Crispatus such as Invivo Femme V, otherwise Canesflor and Optibac offer good options.

If you would like to run a vaginal microbiome test to understand if it maybe linked to your fertility or miscarriages then you can book a 1:1 Fertility and Miscarriage Assessment with us **here.**

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