

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

1. Risk factors for vaginal infections include pregnancy, perimenopause/menopause, poor personal hygiene, tight undergarments, synthetic clothing, frequent douching, allergies, oral contraceptives, use of antibiotics, diabetes and intercourse with infected partner.
2. Foul smelling discharge of any color may indicate vaginitis or cervicitis.
3. Health, medication and sexual history are important for the assessment of vaginal infections. Questions to ask the patient include:
  - a. Are you experiencing any vaginal discharge that is unusual in color, amount or odor
  - b. Are you experiencing any pain or itching of the genital or groin area
  - c. Ask about risk factors listed above
4. Different types of infections require different types of culture media. Discuss with physician and with lab personnel about appropriate swabs/media to use, which will be related to patient's symptoms and risk factors.

**EQUIPMENT:**

Swab with culture media

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Use two patient identifiers.
2. Adhere to standard precautions and explain procedure to patient.
3. Place patient in lithotomy position: Lay patient flat on her back, knees flexed perpendicular to the bed.
4. Drape the client for privacy.
5. Don gloves.
6. Inspect for any discharge coming from vagina.
7. Insert the swab into the vagina and rotate against the vaginal wall, anterior and lateral to the cervix for 30 seconds.
8. Withdraw the swab and tell patient to relax position.
9. Place the swab in culture tube.
10. Follow instructions that come with the culture tube on how to place swab in the tube and activate culture media.
11. Close the tube securely.
12. Place label with patient's name, date of birth, date and time specimen obtained, and your initials.
13. Place tube in biohazard specimen bag.
14. Place requisition in pocket of specimen bag.
15. Arrange to have specimen delivered to lab. Usually cultures must be processed by lab within 2 hours.

**AFTER CARE:**

1. Document in patient record:
  - a. Date and time specimen obtained
  - b. How specimen obtained (by vaginal swab)
  - c. Name of test ordered by physician

- d. Name of lab, and when delivered
  - e. Any signs of inflammation, infection or trauma noted
  - f. Patient's response to procedure.
  - g. Any instructions given to patient/caregiver
  - h. Any communication with physician
2. Follow-up with physician or lab about test results.

**REFERENCE:**

CDC (2001). Diseases characterized by vaginal discharge. Retrieved on June 1, 2012 from <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/vaginal-discharge.htm>

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