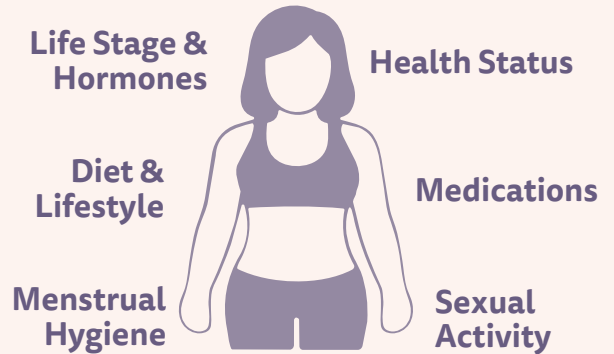


The vaginal microbiota: Supporting reproductive tract health

Microbes are increasingly understood to play important roles in human health. A complex community of microbes inhabits every body surface, including the female reproductive tract.

What influences the vaginal microbiota?

The composition of the vaginal microbiota changes throughout a woman's life, and is shaped by many factors:



Which microbes live in the vagina?

Typically, the vaginal microbiota is dominated by one particular genus of bacteria - *Lactobacillus*. This is in contrast to the gut microbiota, where greater number of species (diversity) is associated with health.

Many individuals have a single dominant *Lactobacillus* species in the vagina, commonly one of:



Lactobacillus crispatus



Lactobacillus iners



Lactobacillus jensenii



Lactobacillus gasseri

Vagina

Imbalance in the vaginal microbiota may contribute to:

- Bacterial vaginosis and vaginal infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Fertility challenges
- Pregnancy complications and preterm birth
- Cervical cell abnormalities

Lactobacilli perform several beneficial functions in the vagina

- Produce antimicrobials e.g. lactic acid
- Crowd out pathogens
- Strengthen protective vaginal lining
- Support local immune defences

Certain probiotics may benefit vaginal health

Probiotics are live microorganisms with health benefits. Specific probiotics may support the treatment and prevention of vaginal infections. Most probiotics used for vaginal health are specific types of lactobacilli, taken orally or applied locally. Consult your healthcare professional about which probiotic strains have been researched for your particular health needs.

Probiotics can be consumed as foods and supplements



Or in specialised formats for vaginal application

