### What is vaginal discharge?

Vaginal discharge is a normal, healthy bodily function that helps keep the vulva and vagina healthy. It consists of a combination of fluid and cells made by the cervix that is shed through the vagina.

#### Normal discharge:
- **Clear, stretchy, and slippery (like egg whites)** for several days before and after ovulation; helps sperm survive and fertilize the egg.
- **Cloudy or white, and feels thick, pasty, or creamy** before fertile days.
- **Dry or thick; minimal discharge until period begins again** post-fertile days.
- **Dry or damp, no observable discharge for a few days** after your period.
- **Mostly blood cells from the uterus shedding its inner lining** during your period.
- **Dry, stretchy, and slippery (like egg whites)** before fertile days.
- **Clear, thin, and slippery** (like egg whites) for several days before and after ovulation; helps sperm survive and fertilize the egg.

#### Abnormal discharge:
- **Green** not healthy, may indicate a sexually transmitted infection (STI) like chlamydia.
- **Pink** common right before period (or if pregnant, shortly before labor begins).
- **Red** typically indicates a period, but can also mean miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy (report clots, heavy or abnormal bleeding or abdominal pain to your healthcare provider).
- **Brown** typically old blood leaving the body, not a concern.
- **Yellow** can be normal after your period, but may indicate infection if there is pain or unusual color.
- **White** healthy, common during non-fertile days and throughout pregnancy (lumpy, white “cottage cheese”-style mucus can mean a yeast infection).

### Yes, it’s normal for vaginal discharge to change!

Your discharge changes throughout your monthly cycle, providing clues to your fertile days (the days when you are most likely to get pregnant).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During your period</th>
<th>What color should vaginal discharge be?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly blood cells from the uterus shedding its inner lining</td>
<td>Clear (healthy, indicates days of peak fertility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After your period</td>
<td>White (healthy, common during non-fertile days and throughout pregnancy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After sex</td>
<td>Green (not healthy, may indicate a sexually transmitted infection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before fertile days</td>
<td>Pink (common right before period or if pregnant, shortly before labor begins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertile days</td>
<td>Red (typically indicates a period, but can also mean miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-fertile days</td>
<td>Brown (typically old blood leaving the body, not a concern)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Before fertile days</td>
<td>Yellow (can be normal after your period, but may indicate infection if there is pain or unusual color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertile days</td>
<td>Green (greenish gray, may indicate a sexually transmitted infection (STI) like chlamydia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hormones affect your vaginal discharge

Estrogen levels affect mucus, so women with lower estrogen (during menopause or while taking birth control) typically have less discharge or drier patches of sticky mucus.

### Does vaginal discharge have a smell?

Normal, healthy discharge has only a slight odor. After sex, it’s normal to smell semen and other fluids, but these disappear after a shower. A foul, fishy odor can indicate bacterial vaginosis — an infection that needs to be treated.

### What is the smell like?

- Normal discharge: No smell
- Yeast infection: Foul, fishy odor
- Bacterial vaginosis: Foul, fishy odor
- Period: Blood odor
- Ectopic pregnancy: Blood odor

### How to observe discharge

- **Observe discharge by wiping with clean, flat tissue or touch with your fingers to note the texture.**
- **Before fertile days:** Cloudy or white, and feels thick, pasty, or creamy
- **Fertile days:** Clear, stretchy, and slippery (like egg whites)
- **Post-fertile days:** Dry or thick; minimal discharge until period begins again

### Health benefits of vaginal discharge

- **Microbiome:** Provides an environment for good bacteria to flourish.
- **Antimicrobial:** Helps fight off harmful bacteria.
- **Ph level:** Maintains the pH level of the vulva and vagina, which is typically 4.5.

### Contact your healthcare provider

If you notice discharge or vaginal odors that concern you.

### Additional resources

- [Vaginal discharge: What is it?](https://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/vaginal-discharge-what-is-it/)  
- [Vaginal discharge: How do you treat it?](https://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/vaginal-discharge-how-do-you-treat-it/)