

# INFLAMMATION OF THE VAGINA (VAGINITIS)

## BASICS

### OVERVIEW

- “Vaginal” refers to the vagina; the “vagina” is the tubular passageway leading from the opening of the vulva to the cervix of the uterus; “vulvar” refers to the vulva; the “vulva” is the external genitalia of females
- “Vaginitis” is inflammation of the vagina or vestibule (space at the entrance of the vagina)
- “Bitch” is a female dog

### SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

#### Species

- Primarily dogs

#### Mean Age and Range

- Anatomic abnormalities and inflammation of the vagina in animals prior to puberty (known as “prepubertal vaginitis”)—suspect in bitches that have not gone through puberty
- May occur at any age in any breed or with any ovarian status (that is, whether intact or spayed)

#### Predominant Sex

- Females

### SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Discharge from the vulva
- Frequent voiding of small volumes of urine (known as “pollakiuria”)
- Vaginal licking
- Spotting
- Scooting
- Attracting males
- Discharge from the vagina; vaginal discharge is any substance (such as blood, mucus, pus) coming from the vagina, through the vulvar opening
- Possibly inflamed vulva and vagina

### CAUSES

- Immature vagina (prior to puberty)
- Foreign bodies
- Urinary tract infections
- Vaginal trauma
- Urine or feces contamination in patients with certain congenital (present at birth) anatomic abnormalities
- Urine contamination in patients with ectopic ureters; the ureters are tubes from the kidneys to the bladder; during development, they may not attach to the bladder properly or may attach to reproductive organs instead; when this occurs, they are called “ectopic ureters” and one or both can terminate in the lower urethra, uterus, or vagina
- Inability to control urination (known as “incontinence”) owing to low levels of estrogen (known as “hypoestrogenism”)
- Tumor or cancer of the vagina—such as transmissible venereal tumor; leiomyoma
- Bacterial infections, such as *Pasteurella*; *Streptococcus*; *E. coli*; *Pseudomonas*; *Mycoplasma*; *Chlamydia*; *Brucella canis*
- Viral infection—herpes
- Localized accumulation of blood in the vagina (known as a “vaginal hematoma”)
- Vaginal abscess
- Medications or products containing male hormones (known as “androgens”)
- Narrowing of the entrance to the vagina (known as a “vestibulovaginal stricture”)
- Zinc toxicity reported

### RISK FACTORS

- Medications or products containing male hormones (androgens)—may cause enlargement of the clitoris (known as “clitoral hypertrophy”)
- Prophylactic antibiotics—may alter the normal vaginal bacteria and allow overgrowth of disease-causing species
- Anatomic abnormalities in bitches prior to going through puberty

## TREATMENT

### HEALTH CARE

- Usually treated as outpatients
- Inpatient—surgical management of anatomic abnormalities, foreign bodies, or tumors/cancer

## ACTIVITY

- Normal

## DIET

- Normal

## SURGERY

- Remove or treat any inciting causes—foreign body; tumor or cancer; anatomic abnormalities
- Surgical removal of the vagina (known as “vaginectomy”)—has been used in patients that do not respond to medical treatment

## MEDICATIONS

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive.

### ***Inflammation of the Vagina Prior to Puberty (Prepubertal Vaginitis)***

- Inflammation of the vagina in a bitch prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—[diethylstilbestrol](#) to induce “heat” or “estrus” may help; long-term effects not documented; discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with your pet’s veterinarian

### ***Primary Inflammation of the Vagina (Vaginitis)***

- Appropriate systemic antibiotics—normally eradicate susceptible bacteria within 24 hours
- Vaginal douches, as directed by your pet’s veterinarian—0.05% chlorhexidine or 0.5% povidone-iodine twice daily until the discharge resolves; reported to be beneficial

## FOLLOW-UP CARE

### PATIENT MONITORING

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—re-examine after the first “heat” or “estrus” or when physical maturity is reached
- Mature patients—re-examine after a 14-day course of antibiotics
- If condition persists—reevaluate for an underlying or another cause; perform a vaginal bacterial culture and sensitivity test

### PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE

- Some rationale may be considered for delaying spaying (ovariohysterectomy) until after the first “heat” or “estrus” in patients prior to puberty with long-term (chronic) inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis), because some cases do not respond to medical treatment after the patient is spayed

### EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis)—normally resolves after the first “heat” or “estrus”
- Adults—inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis) usually resolves if the causative factor is removed; antibiotic therapy and vaginal douches may hasten recovery of uncomplicated, long-term (chronic) cases to within 2 weeks

## KEY POINTS

- Inflammation of the vagina in an animal prior to puberty (prepubertal vaginitis) normally resolves after the first “heat” or “estrus” and antibiotic therapy is not needed
- Inflammation of the vagina (vaginitis) in adults often is associated with a correctable predisposing factor
- Spaying (ovariohysterectomy) and isolation of patients should be considered for patients infected with *Brucella canis*
- Medications or products containing male hormones (androgens) or estrogens must be discontinued, as directed by your pet’s veterinarian