



Vaginal Soothing Recipes

Baking Soda

- **Baking Soda Bath** (for inflammation, pain, and itch): Add 2-4 tablespoons of baking soda to 2 inches of bathwater. Sit in it for 15 minutes to reduce itchiness and pain. Do this 2-3 times in the first week and once or twice each week thereafter to prevent recurrences.
- **Baking Soda Douche** (for inflammation, pain, and itch): Mix 1-2 teaspoons of baking soda in 1 pint (four cups) of warm water. Gently douche once or twice each week as needed.

Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple Cider Soak: Add one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar to 1 gallon of warm to hot water (for a small basin) and let it sit for 20 minutes. Alternatively, add 3 cups of apple cider vinegar to the bath water and soak for 20 minutes. When taking sitz baths, be sure to swirl the water into the vaginal opening.

Alternating Apple Cider Douche: This douche is typical for a yeast infection. I mention it here to restore some acidity to the vagina, which increases the pH, a condition that fungus dislikes. If you have been using antibiotics for BV, you have a higher chance of developing a secondary yeast infection. In the morning, add 2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar to 2 cups of room-temperature water, then douche. In the evening, add 1 teaspoon of plain yogurt (organic, plain only) or the contents of 2 lactobacillus capsules to 1 cup of warm water, then douche. Do this for 14 days and nights, no longer.

Plain Yogurt

The old-world vaginal yeast *cure* was to apply or douche with buttermilk mixed with a bit of water. However, studies show this is ineffective at curing BV or yeast infection. Still, it can be very soothing. Inserting plain yogurt (no fruit, added sugars, or dyes) into the vagina before bedtime may ease irritation. Plain yogurt contains lactobacilli (usually *L. acidophilus*), as does the inner vagina. The overgrowth of healthy bacteria disrupts the ecological balance of the vagina, leading to a yeast infection. Applying plain yogurt may help to restore balance and ease irritation. However, once again, this is not a cure. Studies show that tampons soaked in yogurt and then applied do not deliver the lactobacillus to the vagina properly. You can insert a soaked piece of sterile gauze or plain yogurt at night for temporary symptom relief for 7-14 days.

Tea Tree Essential Oil

Tea Tree essential oil is considered by many to be antibacterial and antifungal, with antiseptic and skin-healing properties. However, there seems to be a great deal of controversy over whether tea tree oil can rid all types of vaginal infections. Tea tree oil is best used as an antiseptic and preventive for vaginitis and vaginosis, but it is only a cure for yeast infection, not BV. I mention its uses, as it is often effective as a vaginal soother. It helps relieve the pain and discomfort associated with yeast and other fungal infections, skin irritations, genital warts, and herpes lesions.

Tea tree oil may burn slightly, but only for a few moments. You should barely be able to smell the oil in your preparations. Some individuals are sensitive to tea tree oil and must dilute it substantially, thereby reducing its effectiveness.

Tea Tree Oil Douche: Mix five drops of 100% tea tree essential oil into one quart of warm water. Swirl slightly to ensure it is blended. You may also add 2-4 drops of garlic juice. Garlic fights infection.

Tea Tree Oil Suppositories: Tea tree essential oil suppository packages typically contain six capsules, each containing 200 mg of tea tree essential oil in a vegetable base, to be inserted at bedtime. They are available at your health store or online and should be used as directed for a yeast infection.

Tea Tree Oil Sitz Bath: Add ten drops of 100% tea tree essential oil to half a tub of warm water and soak for at least 20 minutes.

Tea Tree Anti-Itch & Burn Ointment: Add six drops of tea tree essential oil to 1 tablespoon of aloe vera gel and mix. Apply it right to the vagina to relieve itching. Another alternative is to swab the inside of your vagina with your finger with the solution. Aloe vera gel is often used for burns and is incredibly soothing for irritated vaginal tissue.

Hydrogen Peroxide for Bacterial Vaginosis ONLY

Hydrogen Peroxide Therapy has treated vaginal complaints in Italy (for the past 100 years), the United Kingdom, and Canada. I don't suggest it as a *cure*, as it may or may not clear your infection, depending on the severity of your condition and how long you have had it. However, hydrogen peroxide does relieve all symptoms *immediately*. The vagina creates hydrogen peroxide on its own. In the absence of its natural hydrogen peroxide, healthy vaginal bacteria can become imbalanced and overgrow, usually due to low levels of lactobacilli in the vagina. Peroxide is also an antiseptic and an anti-infective. It is water with an extra oxygen molecule. Vaginally applied, hydrogen peroxide helps to balance vaginal pH. This extra molecule produces bubbling when it comes into contact with harmful bacteria.

Hydrogen peroxide may cause infected tissue to burn upon application, as it can dislodge harmful bacteria from the skin. The burn does not damage healthy cells; it removes infected cells without side effects. It does not cause this bubbly reaction in healthy skin tissue.

Medical tests worldwide show that 3% hydrogen peroxide is as effective as, if not more effective than, prescription drugs such as Metronidazole or Clindamycin. Still, it is not considered a cure. Here is why.

Some circles consider this a cure if the symptoms disappear within seven days of starting treatment. Others say 21-30 days is a better judge of a cure. However, most cases of bacterial vaginosis recur 2-3 months after treatment, indicating they were not truly cured. Any absence of symptoms before that is considered just that, an absence of symptoms. No studies have determined whether a bacterial vaginosis infection is the same infection, a re-infection, or a new infection.

The difficulty in administering hydrogen peroxide therapy stems from numerous variations in appropriate dosage and duration of use. If you research this cure for yourself, you will soon discover that most instructions are incomplete. For example, the peroxide dosage may be specified, but the author doesn't indicate whether to dilute it with water or how often to apply the treatment. An article might mention how often to use it, but omit whether to mix the peroxide with water. You'll find some practitioners advising diluting peroxide with water but neglecting to specify how much peroxide to use. In contrast, others provide a specific combination of water and peroxide but still fail to specify how often to use it or for how long.

Of the exacts I found during research, one doctor said to douche with three tablespoons of 3% hydrogen peroxide mixed in one quart of water for seven evenings in a row. Another said to douche with 1/2 peroxide (3% hydrogen peroxide) and 1/2 water for 3-5 days, and another advised douching with *only* 3% hydrogen peroxide just *one* time. One report from a midwife suggested diluting it first, then decreasing the dilution nightly until you reach full strength. However, they did not specify how long this might take.

Based on research and personal experience, I've developed the following action plan for douching with hydrogen peroxide. Please consult your doctor before trying the remedies outlined below.

The Necessary Items for the Hydrogen Peroxide Douche

You will use the over-the-counter, garden-variety **3% Hydrogen Peroxide** found in the Band-Aid aisle at the drugstore. 35% Food Grade Hydrogen Peroxide can be purchased and diluted to a suitable 3% solution. However, there is no reason to buy this type of peroxide when 3% is already available for a fraction of the cost. If you purchase the 35% product, **DO NOT** use it without diluting it to 3%. Unless you're a math whiz, use the 3% variety. And **NEVER use more than a 3% dilution of peroxide**, or you will burn your vaginal tissues.

By the way, while over-the-counter 3% hydrogen peroxide is fine for douching, cuts, scrapes, and scratches, it's never safe to consume. It is not suitable for internal use (by swallowing or intravenously).

When you see the word *douche* here, it means "rinse". Douching can imply a high water pressure, which is undesirable. Simply installing the water into the vagina and letting it gently flow out is all that is required. When you see the word "*douche*", think "rinse". The 3% hydrogen peroxide will not hurt the vagina, as the vagina creates its own hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), but it is better to be gentle to such sensitive parts.

Items to Set Aside:

- 3% hydrogen peroxide found at the drugstore (approximately \$2)
- A measuring spoon (1 tablespoon).
- A measuring cup.
- Use distilled water purchased by the gallon (approximately \$1.25 each). *Don't use tap water.* It contains chlorine and fluoride.
- Buy a travel-size douche bottle or funnel for smaller amounts of fluid (approximately \$2). Go to the store and buy a cheap, ready-made douche. Empty its contents and rinse out the bottle. You will replace the mixture with your peroxide-distilled water formulation.
- Purchase a standard douchebag for using more significant amounts of water (approximately \$8).
- A timer or clock.

Once you have your douche prepared, apply a drop or two of your mixed solution from the bottle or bag onto the entrance of the vagina. You may experience a slight burning sensation that feels more like warmth. If it burns too much for comfort, add a bit of water to your douche, just a little, and apply just a drop or two again. If you ever experience pain, stinging, or burning vaginally from the peroxide douche, use less peroxide in your douche.

Hydrogen peroxide is an antiseptic and disinfectant. It cannot cure BV on its own, but it can eliminate infection caused by BV for a time while you are working on ways to boost your vaginal lactobacilli. Each day, you should experience increased tolerance to hydrogen peroxide, allowing you to increase the amount accordingly.

If you prefer not to use a douching apparatus, you can use your finger to rinse the vagina with your douche mixture of choice (while following all other suggestions). You may choose from any of the three douching rituals below.

#1 Douche - 7-10 Night Rinse

Suppose you are experiencing the early signs of a bacterial infection or very mild symptoms. In that case, you might douche with 3 tablespoons of 3% hydrogen peroxide mixed with 1-1/4 to 4 cups (no less than 1/4 cup) of distilled water for 7 consecutive evenings, no more than 10. Use a standard douchebag. It holds more water.

- While douching, make sure you are not forcing the flow. You don't want to push the water up into your cervix, especially if you're pregnant. You only want to rinse the vagina.
- Standing in the shower while douching or sitting on the toilet with your legs apart is fine.
- Allow the water to flow in and run back out gently.
- After the last water runs out, pat dry with a soft cloth.
- You may also rinse the vagina with pure water immediately after douching with the peroxide mix.

Most women report that their symptoms immediately improve after the first douche.

#2 Douche - 3-5 Night Rinse

For more bothersome symptoms, you may douche with 1/4 cup (3 TB) of 3% hydrogen peroxide combined with 1/4 cup of distilled water up to twice per day (morning and evening) for 3-5 nights. You may use a small kitchen funnel or a travel-size douche bottle. If using half-and-half burns too much, use douche #1 (above) and reduce the amount of water used each day. A travel-size douche bottle holds only 3/4 cup of fluid. Fill the bottle halfway with 3% hydrogen peroxide (approximately three tablespoons) and the remainder with distilled water (approximately three tablespoons). Slowly and gently squeeze the contents into the vagina while lying, sitting, or standing. Allow the water to flow in, then gently run it back out. After the last water runs out, pat dry with a soft cloth. You may also rinse the vagina with pure water.

#3 Douche - A One-Time Rinse

This douche isn't for pregnant women or anyone who has severe vaginal irritation because it will burn and cause minor, sharp pains, not for long, but it *will* burn. You should use this douche when you first notice symptoms of BV or after being symptom-free for at least a week or two. Fill a travel-size douche bottle half full with 3% hydrogen peroxide (1/4 cup). Then, while lying flat in the tub with legs apart, rinse the vagina with the peroxide. Try to hold the peroxide in the vagina for 3 minutes. If it runs out, that's OK. Just lie there for your 3 minutes. Do not increase the time you lie there. Three minutes is sufficient. Then, rinse with water and pat dry. This douche can also be done on the last day of either Douche #1 or Douche #2 for added measure, unless you are pregnant.

There are Limits to How Often One Should Douche with Peroxide

For some, douching may have caused the very problem they are trying to eliminate. Rinsing out good bacteria, not douching correctly, or using feminine hygiene products that damage 'good' vaginal bacteria can all harm the vaginal flora.

There doesn't appear to be an exact science regarding how often one may douche. However, douching too often is considered poor practice. It disrupts the natural vaginal flora, leading to overgrowth of microbes other than lactobacilli, including fungi and bacteria. However, when you are already bacterially imbalanced by infection, it can help to at least "anti-infect" while taking other measures to restore vaginal health.

Never douche for more than 7-14 days unless you have a doctor's permission. The idea here is to raise the pH of the vagina with the use of acidic elements. If your symptoms persist, worsen, or recur, see your doctor.

Douching Precautions

Please follow these guidelines for the douching methods listed above.

- Do not force water into the vagina. Gently rinse instead.
- Do not use #1 Douche for more than 14 days.
- Do not use #2 Douche for longer than 3-5 days.
- Do not use full-strength peroxide more than once. You will see this recommended on other websites.

The Grapefruit Seed Extract Douche

Although the *Hydrogen Peroxide Douche* can keep BV symptoms at bay, the *Grapefruit Seed Extract* douche may go a step further. Since its discovery in 1964, it has been tested and validated by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Pasteur Institute in France, and numerous physicians for the treatment of bacterial vaginosis. Grapefruit seed extract (GSE) helps clear BV symptoms by penetrating biofilm.

Grapefruit seed extract, sometimes called *Citrus Seed Extract*, is available online in liquid concentrate and vegetable caps. You will want to purchase the liquid form to douche with, as you will mix it with water. I suggest using distilled or spring water, as chlorinated water can burn sensitive vaginal tissues. Grapefruit seed extract is an ingredient in some vaginal rinse products, such as *ProSeed Feminine Rinse*, available through VitaCost.com. It is available in regular and maximum-strength formulations.

I suggest purchasing the *Maximum GSE* from NutriBiotic.com. Other, cheaper brands are offered through various online companies, but supplies seem limited, shipping costs vary, and, most importantly, ingredients aren't always disclosed. Follow the directions for douching according to product information.

Should you discover grapefruit seed extract is not for you, *Earth's Botanical Harvest* in Sandy, Oregon, makes a line of vaginal suppositories recommended by numerous alternative medicine practitioners that claim to cure BV. The suppositories have a cocoa butter base. I understand that only licensed practitioners can order from this company. You may refer them to your care provider to place the order. Navigating their website can be difficult, but the products are worth the effort.

After Your Douche (or for Problems with Itch)

After douching, it is safe to apply a small amount of olive oil, flaxseed oil, vitamin E oil, or zinc oxide (or A&D Ointment) to the entrance and folds of the vagina to prevent urine or vaginal discharge from irritating your skin as it heals. Post-menopausal women often have thinner vaginal tissues, and fluids can irritate the skin, causing a secondary issue of inflammation and irritation. You may also choose to apply your hormone creams at this time.

Aloe Vera Juice & Gel

You can apply aloe vera gel or juice to the inside and outside of the vagina for itch relief. Aloe vera gel can also serve as a base for diluting essential oils. However, do not use the gel or juice directly from the plant. You may also use virgin coconut oil, olive oil, or cocoa butter to coat the vagina lightly.

Cabbage Leaves

I've been told that you can tuck cabbage leaves on top of a sanitary pad to relieve vaginal itching and discomfort within a couple of hours.

Restoring Lactobacilli Post Douching

Combine the *Hydrogen Peroxide Douche* with vaginal acidophilus insertions (one tablet or capsule after each rinse session). Vaginal inserts will supply the vaginal environment with fresh live lactobacilli, which may help restore vaginal flora and pH and protect the vagina from recurrences. These inserts are also effective for yeast infections.

Look for an acidophilus formula containing significant amounts of *L. reuteri* and *L. rhamnosus* (probiotics), with at least 1 billion live cultures. Before bedtime, insert the capsule or tablet, or place the contents of 1-2 capsules in a travel-size douche bottle and rinse gently with the solution. Then, pat dry.

BV is resistant to most antibiotics. However, they may be of little help unless you are also on top of your protease enzymes, which break down the biofilm (the protective shell around the microbial cells).

The Betadine or Povidone-Iodine Douche

Last but certainly not least, *Betadine* may help eliminate your bacterial vaginosis infection permanently. Betadine is an antiseptic and disinfectant. Betadine solution has been used for years to eradicate symptoms of BV. While most studies suggest it works only for light or mild non-specific BV infection, this type of douche is reported to cure a severe infection as well. It's an ingredient in *Summer's Eve Medicated Douche*, available at most drugstores.

Each *Summer's Eve* box contains two travel-size douches. Each package contains small, premeasured packets of povidone-iodine to be added to the bottles before douching. Walmart used to sell Betadine solution over the counter, but it's often kept in the pharmacy these days. Follow the directions on the product container, and do not use it if you are allergic to iodine, are pregnant, or are nursing.

NOTE: For information regarding vaginal complaints, symptoms, causes, and holistic alternatives for prevention and relief, see [Vaginal Complaints](#).

