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## What women need to know about their vaginal pH

### Q & A with Dr. Joanna Ellington



Dr. Joanna Ellington

A woman's vagina is a pretty amazing body part. Not only can it be a source of pleasure but it also can help create and bring new life into the world. On top of all that, it has the extraordinary ability to keep itself clean by secreting natural fluids and maintaining a healthy pH to encourage the growth of good bacteria and discourage harmful bacteria from moving in. Despite being so important, many women are never taught the vital role that pH plays in their vaginal health or how to keep it in balance.

We recently interviewed renowned Reproductive Physiologist and inventor of IsoFresh Balancing Vaginal Gel, Dr. Joanna Ellington, to give us the low down on what every woman needs to know about their vaginal pH and how to maintain a healthy level.

#### What is pH?

**Dr. Ellington:** PH is a scale of acidity and alkalinity. The measurements range from 0 to 14: a pH lower than 7 is acidic and a pH higher than 7 is considered alkaline.

#### What is the “perfect” pH level for a woman’s vagina?

**Dr. E.:** For most women of a reproductive age vaginal pH should be 4.5 or less. For post-menopausal women this can go up to about 5. The vagina will naturally be at a high pH right after sex, during your period, after you have a baby or during ovulation (your fertile time).

#### Are there diet and environmental factors that affect a women’s vaginal pH level?

**Dr. E.:** Yes, iron zinc and manganese have been found to be critical for lactobacillus (healthy bacteria) to function. Many women don't eat well and should supplement these, especially if they are vegetarian. Additionally,

many vegetarians have low estrogen because they do not eat the animal fats that help make our sex steroids. Without estrogen, vaginal pH and bacterial imbalance can occur. It is important that women on these diets ensure good fat intake from other sources, and have estrogen and testosterone and iron levels checked each year.

### **Do clothing and underwear affect vaginal pH?**

**Dr. E.:** Yes, tight clothing and thong underwear have been shown in studies to decrease populations of healthy vaginal bacteria and cause pH changes in the vagina. Even if you wear these sometimes, it is important for your vaginal ecosystem that loose clothing or skirts be worn some too.

### **How does a women's pH level impact sexual activity and reproductive health?**

**Dr. E.:** When pH is above 5 in the vagina, unpleasant odors (a rotten smell or fishy) are produced by a chemical reaction of the bacteria in the vagina. The number one reason women use freshening gels and/or douche is to stop unwanted odors and to feel attractive to their partner. If this high pH lasts and odors become constant, a disease called bacterial vaginosis (BV) can also occur. If left untreated, BV can increase your risk for Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), Pelvic inflammatory disease or early labor or birth if pregnant.

### **What can women do when they need a pH "refresh"?**

**Dr. E.:** Many of the freshening gels on the market act as deodorants to neutralize and stop odor production before it can form, however, they have salt levels 5-10 times higher than a woman's body fluids. This high salt level has been associated with vaginal cell damage and lactobacillus death which compromises the healthy vaginal ecosystem. I created the IsoFresh Balancing Vaginal Gel formula with balanced salts and a pH to biomatch the healthy vagina. It is isotonic so it won't irritate delicate tissues like other leading products on the market and contains no oils, no glycerin, no hormones, and no parabens. Once applied, it stays put and provides fresh balance for the long haul!

### **Why do you think it is still so difficult for women to discuss their vaginal health in today's society?**

**Dr. E.:** I think there is a sense of failing when we have problems with vaginal health. Even though I work on sexual medicine all day every day, I didn't want to tell my doctors when I was having vaginal dryness after menopause, and I never discussed the increase in unwanted vaginal odor I experienced at this stage of life. I talk opening about it now because I believe I have helped find a solution that may benefit other women. If we don't talk about the problem and how to fix it, women continue to feel like they are the only ones dealing with these issues.

For more information on Dr. Ellington and IsoFresh, visit [myisolove.com](http://myisolove.com)