

Unprotected sex with a new partner might affect vaginal health, microbiome

To find out if sexual activities could shape the vaginal microbiome and, potentially, women's health, Lenka Vodstrcil at Melbourne Sexual Health Centre in Australia and her colleagues tracked the bacteria living in 52 volunteers' vaginas.

The team found that women who had unprotected penile-vaginal sex were much more likely to have a vaginal microbiome dominated by the species *Gardnerella vaginalis* and *Lactobacillus iners*.

This suggests that as well as STIs like chlamydia, non-pathogenic bacteria are sexually transmitted too, says Vodstrcil. This is probably a bad sign for vaginal health, as both species have been linked to bacterial vaginosis, a poorly understood condition that causes abnormal discharge and bad odour.

But penile-vaginal sex isn't necessarily always bad for the vagina. Van de Wijgert thinks that a woman's vaginal microbiome probably adapts to the bacteria present on the penis of a long-term partner. "The risk lies in having sex with a new partner, which is a microbial assault on the vagina," she says. "The vagina will mount an immune response against the bacteria, causing inflammation."

Researchers are trying to develop probiotics that can restore a healthy community of vaginal bacteria.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Unprotected sex may disrupt the microbiome in vagina](#)

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read [GLP on Wikipedia](#)