

# 6 Ways You've Been Cleaning Your Vagina All Wrong

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Sexual Health

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November 29, 2016 11:01 am

When you hop into the shower, do you clean your vagina first or last? Do you use soap or a body wash? A loofa, washcloth, or just your hand? And which of these options are actually, you know, right? As a kid, you're taught to wipe front to back after going to the bathroom and that's pretty much it. So here's an unfortunate news flash: chances are you've been cleaning your downstairs wrong. We asked gynecologists to share the most popular mistakes you may be making and the correct way to clean your vagina.

**1. You're *scrubbing* your vagina.** Not necessary! The skin down there is very sensitive, so you don't need to go crazy. "When washing your vagina in the shower, remember to always be gentle," says [Pari Ghodsi](#), M.D., obstetrician and gynecology doctor at the San Fernando Valley at Northridge Hospital in Los Angeles. "Vaginal scrubbing is not recommended."

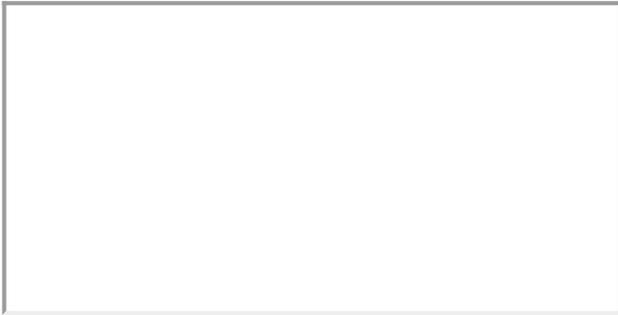
**2. You're *douching* (at all).** You may think you're getting things nice and neat down there, but you could actually be making for irritation and uncomfortable circumstance. "The vagina is a delicate ecosystem that must be maintained at a normal pH of 3.8 to 4.5," says [Mary Jane Minkin](#), M.D., clinical professor at the Department of Obstetrics Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at Yale University School of Medicine. "Everyday events like blood with your period, sex, soaps, certain medications and the water in a douche can all elevate the natural vaginal balance, because those elements have a pH of 7.5 or 8." You want to interfere with nature as little as possible— trust us.

**3. You're using scented body wash to get things clean.** While you can use this on the body, as Dr. Minkin mentions above, the pH of your vagina might not react well with a fruity gel. "The vagina and the vulva are the most sensitive tissues in the body-to harsh soaps, fragrances, and all other possible allergens," says Dr. Minkin. "When

people think of 'clean' they tend to think of harsh, deodorizing soaps, but please don't use these. The less soap the better. If you want to use a soap, use gentle pH balanced washes.”

**4. You like to exfoliate down there.** Heads up: it's unnecessary to exfoliate your vagina. If you notice dry skin, step away from the microbeads. “When you are cleansing your vagina you may use a washcloth, a loofa or sponge, as long as it is a gentle material,” says Dr. Pari.

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**5. You go to town cleaning after sex.** It's normal to want to clean things up, but keep in mind that your vagina itself is self-cleansing, so you don't need to mess with things inside. Simply use a cleansing cloth to refresh the outside of your vagina. “I recommend ones that are gentle and hypoallergenic,” says Dr. Pari. “You can use them as directed at your discretion.”

**6. You feel like you have to shave to keep things tidy.** The way you groom your pubic hair is a personal preference. But it's a common misconception that pubes are unhygienic, explains Dr. Pari. Pubic hair can actually work as a last layer of defense to keep your vagina clean from infection. “If you are shaving and tend to get razor burn or what is medically known as folliculitis it is helpful to make sure you are changing out the razor you are using monthly,” suggests Dr. Pari.