

discharge often denotes BV or trichomoniasis. Specifically, an abnormally increased amount or an abnormal odor of the discharge is associated with one or both of these conditions. Cervical infection with *N. gonorrhoeae* or *C. trachomatis* does not often cause an increased amount or abnormal odor of discharge; however, when these pathogens cause cervicitis, they—like *T. vaginalis*—often result in an increased number of neutrophils in vaginal fluid, which thus takes on a yellow color. Vulvar conditions such as genital herpes or vulvovaginal candidiasis can cause vulvar pruritus, burning, irritation, or lesions as well as external dysuria (as urine passes over the inflamed vulva or areas of epithelial disruption) or vulvar dyspareunia.

Certain vulvovaginal infections may have serious sequelae. Trichomoniasis, BV, and vulvovaginal candidiasis have all been associated with increased risk of acquisition of HIV infection; BV promotes HIV transmission from HIV-infected women to their male sex partners. Vaginal trichomoniasis and BV early in pregnancy independently predict premature onset of labor. BV can also lead to anaerobic bacterial infection of the endometrium and salpinges. Vaginitis may be an early and prominent feature of toxic shock syndrome, and recurrent or chronic vulvovaginal candidiasis develops with increased frequency among women who have systemic illnesses, such as diabetes mellitus or HIV-related immunosuppression (although only a very small proportion of women with recurrent vulvovaginal candidiasis in industrialized countries actually have a serious predisposing illness).

Thus, vulvovaginal symptoms or signs warrant careful evaluation, including speculum and pelvic examination, diagnostic testing, and appropriate therapy specific for the infection identified. Unfortunately, clinicians do not always perform the tests required to establish the cause of such symptoms. Further, self-diagnosis of a specific type of infection—including vulvovaginal candidiasis—is often incorrect. The diagnosis and treatment of the three most common types of vaginal infection are summarized in **Table 136-5**.

TABLE 136-5 Diagnostic Features and Management of Vaginal Infection