Thongs? Do they cause UTIs or yeast infections? [1]

Dear Alice,

Some people say that thongs can cause UTIs or yeast infections, but I like to wear them because they give me that satisfaction that I can't get from anything else. Should I stop wearing them?

Thx,
thong wearers

Answer

Dear thong wearers,

Many people delight in thongs as a sexy and exciting first layer of any outfit, and you are not alone in appreciating the precious freedom from the plague of the prominent panty line they provide. Roughly $575 million worth of thongs (that's 130 million pairs!) are sold in the United States annually; and at no proven harm to their wearers. At this point no scientific studies exist connecting the wearing of thongs to UTIs (urinary tract infections) or yeast infections. However, many gynecologists report anecdotally that an increasing number of thong wearers suffer from recurrent urinary tract and vaginal infections, and they have ideas as to why this is so.

One way a thong might be a culprit of infection is that it can serve as a conduit for bacteria. Since a thong is a continuous and close fitting strip of fabric, it can easily pick up fecal matter and bacteria from the anus, and if the thong moves, can carry that matter forward to the vagina and urinary tract. One gynecologist likened a thong to a subway car transporting bacteria from the rectum to the vagina. UTIs and some types of vaginitis (although not yeast infections) are caused by bacteria, often from fecal matter, which is why thongs could be implicated in some instances of infection.

Thongs can also leave women more susceptible to infections by irritating the vaginal tissues. The function of underwear is to provide a soft barrier between potential irritants, such as your clothes, and the vagina. In addition to failing to provide that barrier, a thong may itself irritate vaginal tissue by causing micro-abrasions or cracks in the skin, which can leave delicate tissues more susceptible to infection.

If you have a compromised immune system, or are prone to these types of infections, then wearing a thong might be riskier for you. Have you found that you have more frequent UTIs or
yeast infections while wearing thongs? If so, you may want to limit wearing them to special occasions, or stop wearing them all together to see if that decreases the infections. For recurring or painful UTIs or yeast infections, you could consult a gynecologist to see what you can do to alleviate the symptoms and prevent future infections.

If you've noticed no particular change in your gynecological health when you're wearing a thong, then you can count yourself among the lucky ones who are not negatively affected by this thin apparel. Here's to enjoying the panty line-free life that you've come to so enjoy!

Alice!

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