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What is the effectiveness of topic probiotics in the prevention of recurrent vaginitis?

Tania Dias

USF Famílias, Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal

Corresponding author: Dr Tania Dias, ACES Entre Douro E Vouga I, USF Famílias, São João da Madeira, Portugal. E-mail: taniadmdias@gmail.com

Background & Aims: Vaginal flora, predominantly consisting of Lactobacillus, is essential to the well-being and vaginal health. Change of its composition are related to the development of vulvovaginal candidiasis (VVC) and bacterial vaginosis (BV). The use of topic probiotics has been addressed in its prevention. Our aim is to systematize the existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of probiotics in reducing vaginal infection recurrence.

Methods: Survey of published articles, between 2000 and 2015, on Medline, evidence-based medicine sites, index of Portuguese medical journals and bibliographic references of the selected articles. The Mesh terms used were: "candidiasis, vulvovaginal", "bacterial, vaginosis", "prevention and control", "probiotics/therapeutic use" and "lactobacillus". for the classification of levels of evidence and assigning the strength of recommendation it was used the SORT scale.

Results: of 659 results found, 14 were selected: 3 clinical guidelines (CG), 9 randomised controlled trials (RCTS) and 2 non-controlled clinical trials.

in the CG, there are not recommendations as to the benefit of the vaginal probiotics in prevention of recurrences, considering that there is not sufficient evidence.

Most of the original work shows a tendency to the reduction of the number of recurrences with the use of probiotics. However, the results are not consistent. Although some original work demonstrates a reduction of recurrences in relation to Candidiasis and vaginosis, this reduction is not present or is not statistically significant in other works.

Discussion: The vaginal probiotics appear to be promising in preventing recurrences, especially in the case of BV, (strength of recommendation B). However, not all the evidence gathered is consistent, in particular regarding the VVC, observing methodological differences regarding study design, sample size and probiotic used (strain, dose, and duration). As such, further studies are needed to support its effectiveness and clinical utility.