Grow Your Own Bacteria

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PWAs face plenty of tough health threats, but some are preventable in simple ways that few doctors will suggest to their patients. As we report in “Douching Dangers,” consistent douching ratchets up women’s risk of contracting gonorrhea (and HIV itself)—this from a procedure that experts say has no known medical benefit. Meanwhile, antibiotics—often medically necessary but overprescribed—can destroy beneficial intestinal bacteria (probiotics) and thus spark painful and even dangerous yeast infections. Research shows that taking probiotic supplements, such as acidophilus or yogurt with live cultures, while on antibiotics can prevent such infections. If these two admonitions—avoid douching, and supplement antibiotics with probiotics—were standard medical advice, thousands of needless infections and millions of dollars in prescription bills could be avoided. So educate your doctor—but meanwhile, take the power into your own hands.

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