

THE ART OF RESEARCH



Balance is key

A vaginal probiotic can restore bacterial balance and improve the quality of life for women.

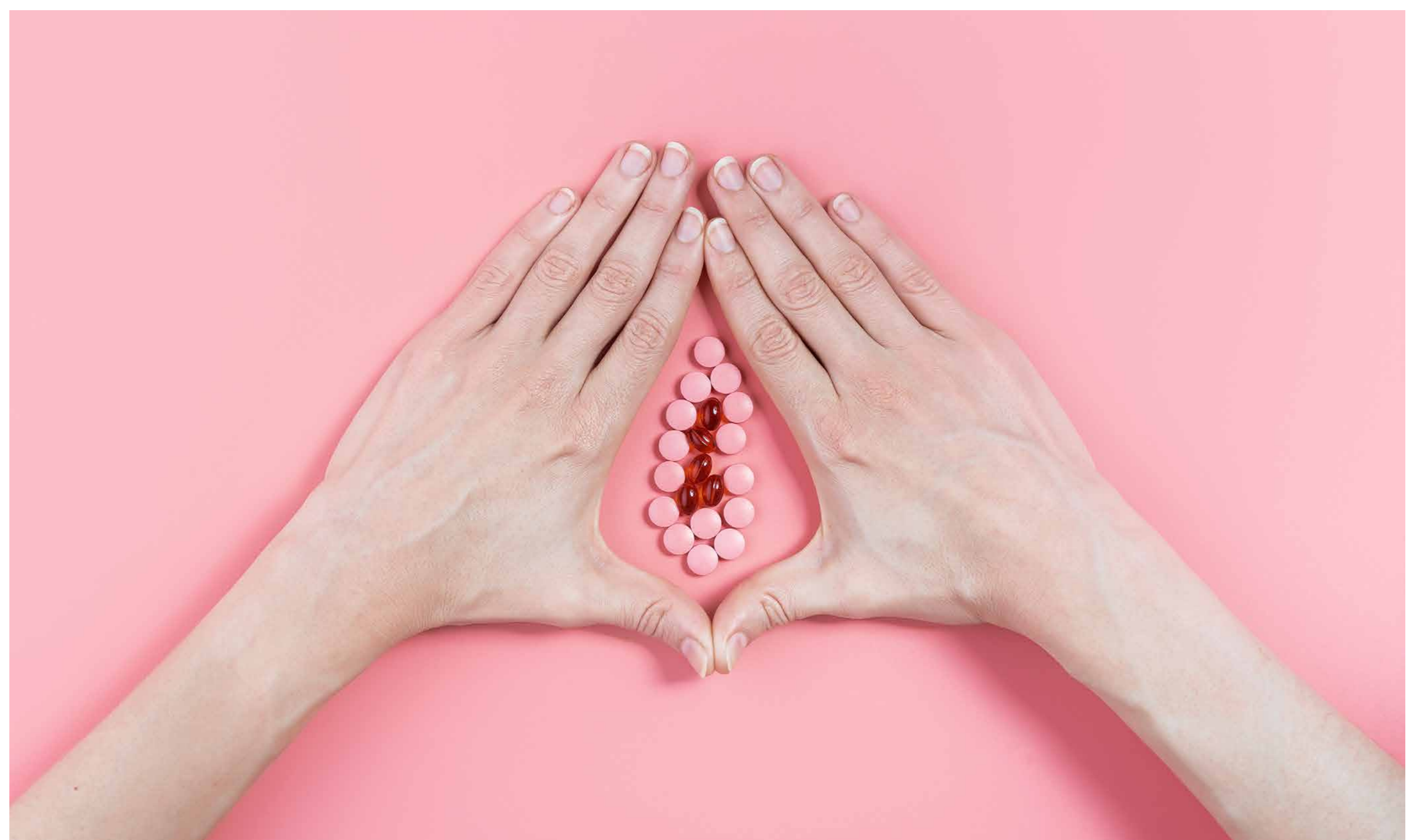
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A probiotic can restore reproductive health in women suffering from bacterial vaginosis.

Presented in association with the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine, this programme forms part of #theArtOfResearch, an initiative of research communication specialists Jive Media Africa.



Six out of 10 South African women suffer from bacterial vaginosis. Bacterial vaginosis is an imbalance of good and bad bacteria that live in the female genital tract. It can be linked to an increased risk of many sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

The current treatment methods often result in a brief resolution of the symptoms, but in most women reoccurrence is the reality.

A consortium of African researchers by the name of VMRC4Africa, in collaboration with researchers in the US, are currently

working on producing a vaginal probiotic.

“This vaginal probiotic will be one of the future tools that will combat bacterial vaginosis in our communities,” says Anika Chicken.

A probiotic contains good bacteria that will help restore the balance of bacteria within the vaginal tract. One of these bacteria that has been identified as presenting in healthy women is *Lactobacillus crispatus*.

The researchers have isolated this bacterium from both local and international young women with an optimal vaginal microbiota, and are

taking the next steps to ensure that women will be benefitting from this probiotic in the near future.

“The hope is that by restoring vaginal balance through probiotics, we can reduce the burden of bacterial vaginosis within our communities, and thereby also decrease the number of sexually transmitted infections.”

However, without the support of funders and government to bring down the cost of this treatment option, South African women may be financially excluded from accessing this treatment.

