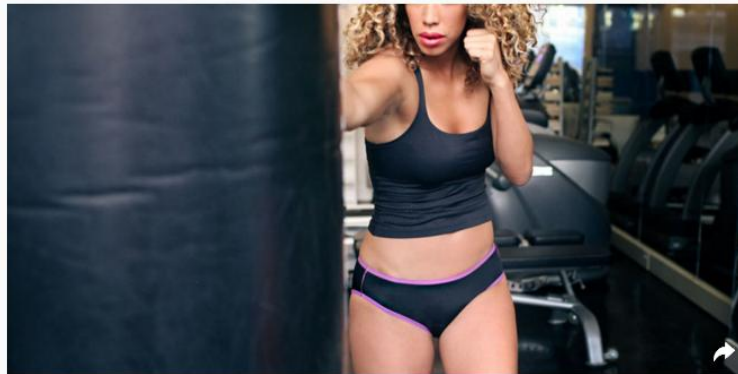


## ELLE

# SHOULD YOU REALLY WEAR A THONG WHEN YOU WORK OUT?

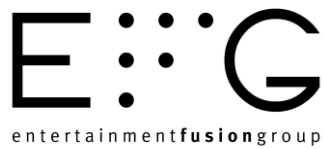
"When you exercise in non-breathable underwear...your vagina suffocates."



Changing into a sports bra before working out is as essential as changing into sneakers. What you're wearing on the bottom, however, rarely gets a second thought. Oftentimes, the only concern is avoiding panty lines, so you might opt for a thong or no underwear at all. But knowing how irritation-prone the sensitive area is, we turned to Dr. Nicole E. Williams of the [Gynecology Institute of Chicago](#) to find out what kind of underwear is ideal for exercise.

Williams warns against using underwear "meant to be seen," that is, anything sheer, lace, or silky. "When you exercise in non-breathable underwear like that, your vagina suffocates," Williams says. "As a result, you keep more moisture trapped in that area, which increases your risk for yeast infections and pH imbalance, which can lead to vaginitis [a condition leading to discharge, itching, and pain]." While Williams says that thongs don't cause vaginal problems if you don't have any existing afflictions in the area, she adds, "Wearing a thong during exercise can bring E.coli living in the rear toward the front as you move, increasing your risk for urinary tract infection," so briefs or other underwear with more fabric are a safer bet. As for wearing leggings alone without any underwear, if they're made of sports material with moisture-wicking properties you'll be fine. Her most important advice: switch your underwear after working out or use the shower right away. "Hanging around in sweaty sticky clothing, cotton or not, is not helpful," she says, "The longer your body is exposed to that environment, the greater propensity that your pH could become imbalanced and lead to vaginitis."

Bottom line: Before working out, switch to underwear with more coverage in breathable fabric and don't hang out in the pair you worked out in for extended periods of time. Ahead, we hunted down comfortable underwear designed for exercise.



**Publication/Outlet:** ELLE.com

**Impressions:** 8,040,618 unique visitors per month

**Date:** October 19, 2015

**Link:** <http://www.elle.com/beauty/health-fitness/news/g27163/underwear-to-work-out/>



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