The Acid Shield Rebuild™

The Gentle 14-Day Plan for African Women Who Wash Constantly and Still Don't Feel Like Themselves



ADAEZE OKONKWO

The Acid Shield Rebuild™

ADAEZE OKONKWO

Contents

Before We Begin: You Are Not Dirty 3

Chapter 1: The Cleanest Woman in the Room Who Doesn't Feel Clean 4

Chapter 2: The Clean-Rebound Loop (Why Everything You Tried Made It Come Back) 7

Chapter 3: Your Body Already Has a Bodyguard 10

Chapter 4: What Our Mothers Reached For, and What Still Helps 13

Chapter 5: Phase 1, Stop the Damage (Days 1-3) 16

Chapter 6: Phase 2, Rebuild the Shield (Days 4-14) 20

Chapter 7: Phase 3, Protect the Shield (Ongoing) 24

Chapter 8: Your Day 1 Roadmap 28

About the Author 32

What to Do Next 32

Disclaimer 33

BEFORE WE BEGIN

You Are Not Dirty

If you are reading this, there is a good chance you have not told anyone why.

Not your husband. Not your mother. Not your best friend, who tells you everything. Maybe not even your doctor, or maybe you told her and left with a prescription and a feeling that she did not really hear you.

So let me start with the most important sentence in this whole guide.

You are not dirty. You have been over-cleaning.

Read that again slowly. I will explain it fully in the chapters ahead. For now, just let it sit with you. It may be the first kind thing anyone has said to you about this.

I am Adaeze. I have spent years listening to women across Nigeria and abroad talk about the things they cannot say out loud. The stories are different, but the thread is always the same: *"I do everything right. Why is this still happening to me?"*

This guide answers that question, calmly and step by step. It shows you why the problem keeps coming back and gives you a gentle plan to stop the cycle.

I also want to be honest about what this guide is not. It is not a replacement for a doctor. Some smells come from infections that need proper testing and treatment, and I will show you exactly how to tell when it is time to go. What I can promise is this: you will understand what is happening in your body, and you will know what to do next.

Let us begin.

CHAPTER 1

The Cleanest Woman in the Room Who Doesn't Feel Clean

So you now know the one sentence to hold on to: you are not dirty. Good. But I know that sentence may feel hard to believe right now, so let us start where you actually are.

Let me describe a day. Tell me if any of it sounds familiar.

You wake up and have a full bath. You wash carefully, more carefully than most people ever do. You use the good soap, or the medicated one, or the one your cousin swore by. Maybe a little Dettol goes into the water, just to be safe.

You put on fresh underwear. You dress, you go to work, and for the first few hours you almost forget about it.

Then, around midday, you feel it. Or you *think* you feel it. Your mind starts checking. You cross your legs. You move in your seat. You wonder if the woman beside you just shifted away, or if she was only reaching for her bag.

So you go to the toilet. You freshen up. You may change your underwear, because you brought a spare, tucked in the bottom of your handbag where nobody will see it.

By evening you are tired in a way that has nothing to do with work. You get home and take another bath, the third one today. You scrub harder this time. You tell yourself, *This time it will hold.*

Sound familiar? I thought so.

The Routine Nobody Sees

Let me tell you about a woman I will call Chioma. That is not her real name, but her story is one I have heard, in different forms, many times.

Chioma was thirty-two, married for four years, with a good job in Lagos. She was neat and put-together, the kind of woman people called "very clean." Her home was spotless.

"I wash more than anyone I know," she told me. "I wash before work, after work, before bed. I use hot water. I have tried every soap in the pharmacy. And still."

She stopped and looked at her hands.

"Last month my husband turned his face away when I got close. He said nothing. But I heard it. I have been hearing that silence every day since."

Now here is what I want you to notice. Chioma was not careless. She was not lazy. She was doing *more* than almost anyone. That is the part that breaks my heart, and I want it to be the part that gives you hope.

Because if you are washing this much and it is still happening, the problem is not that you are not trying hard enough.

What You Do When Nobody Is Looking

There is a second life that comes with this problem, and it is one you have probably never described to anyone.

You choose seats by the aisle so you can leave quickly. You keep your arms pressed tight against your sides on the danfo or the train. You sit at the edge of the church pew instead of the middle. You say “I’m tired” when what you mean is “I’m afraid.”

You turn the lights off before your husband comes close. You suggest sleeping early. You feel relieved when he is busy and guilty about feeling relieved.

You carry small things everywhere: wet wipes, a spare pair of pants, a spray, a mint. Your handbag has become a survival kit.

You have stopped wearing certain clothes. You have stopped hugging people for too long. You have stopped, little by little, feeling at ease in your own skin.

Here is a question, and I want you to answer it honestly, only in your head: **how much of your day is spent thinking about this?**

For most of the women I have listened to, the answer is *most of it*. That is a heavy thing to carry alone.

The Things You Have Been Telling Yourself

When a problem stays secret, it grows in the dark. And in the dark, the mind tells stories.

Maybe you have told yourself:

“Something is wrong with me.”

“Other women do not have this problem.”

“My husband is losing interest because of this.”

“If people knew, they would be disgusted.”

“I must not be washing well enough.”

That last one is the most dangerous. It sounds sensible. It even feels helpful, because it gives you something to *do*. If the problem is not enough washing, then the answer is more washing.

So you wash more. And the cycle feeds itself.

I want you to know something plainly: **every one of those stories is a story, not a fact.** Shame is very good at making guesses sound like truth.

Why Nobody Talks About It

Let me ask you something. How many women have you ever heard discuss this?

Exactly. Almost none.

We talk about headaches, malaria, and even our relatives’ business. But this? This is the thing we whisper about, or do not mention at all. We were raised to believe that a woman’s private health is something to be embarrassed about, hidden, and managed quietly.

And because nobody talks about it, every woman thinks she is the only one.

She is not. Not even close.

The truth is that what you are dealing with is one of the most common reasons women see a doctor, and one of the most common reasons they *do not*. Many women deal with it for years because they are too embarrassed to ask.

So they turn to what is nearby. A friend's advice. A pharmacy shelf. A story from a market woman. A relative who says, "Use salt and hot water." A remedy from a video at midnight.

And many of those things, as we will see soon, are exactly what keeps the problem alive.

Like the Generator That Keeps Running Out of Fuel

Think of it this way.

Imagine your generator keeps shutting down. Every time it does, you pour in more fuel. It runs for a bit, then stops again. So you pour in more, and more, and you become an expert at refuelling.

But nobody has ever asked *why it keeps shutting down.*

You can be the most dedicated fuel-pourer in the whole compound, but if the real fault is somewhere else, you will keep pouring forever and keep feeling like a failure.

That is what has been happening to you. You have been working so hard on the *symptom* that no one has shown you the *pattern* behind it. And once you see the pattern, everything changes.

Before You Turn the Page

I want to give you one small thing to do, so you are not just reading but starting.

It takes five minutes. You will need your phone's notes app or a piece of paper that only you will see.

1. **Write down everything you do in an ordinary day because of this problem.** Every wash, every product, every spare item in your bag. Do not judge yourself. Just list it.
2. **Beside each item, write how long you have been doing it.** A month? A year? Five years?
3. **Put a star next to anything you do because someone told you to, not because you understood why.** Just mark it. We will come back to this list.

Keep it safe. Do not change anything yet. In a few chapters, this list will become one of the most useful tools you have.

What Comes Next

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, take this: **you are not the only one, you are not failing, and your effort has never been the problem.** You have been working hard on the wrong side of the problem, and nobody told you.

But there is a natural question sitting right behind everything I have just said. If you are washing this carefully and it keeps coming back, then *what is actually going on?*

That is what we are going to uncover next. There is a cycle, a very specific one, and once you see it, you will look at your bathroom shelf in a completely different way. It is the reason the antibiotics work for two weeks and then fail. It is the reason the harder you scrub, the worse it gets.

It is called the Clean-Rebound Loop, and I promise you, once you see it, you cannot unsee it.

CHAPTER 2

The Clean-Rebound Loop (Why Everything You Tried Made It Come Back)

Last time, I asked you to write down everything you do in a normal day because of this problem, and to put a star beside anything you do without really knowing why. If you did that, keep the list close, because we are about to use it.

I also told you that you have been working hard on the wrong side of the problem. Today I am going to show you exactly what I mean.

The Loop Nobody Explained to You

Remember Chioma? The neat, hardworking woman from Lagos who bathed three times a day?

After we spoke, she did something that changed how she saw everything. She drew her own routine on paper, step by step. When she was done, she stared at it for a long time.

“It’s a circle,” she said. “I’ve been running in a circle.”

She was right. What happens to so many women is a loop, and it goes like this:

1. **You notice a smell, or you fear one.** Maybe someone reacts, or maybe it is only your own worry.
2. **You clean harder.** More washing, stronger soap, Dettol in the water, salt, wipes, a scented wash.
3. **Your body’s natural protection gets stripped away.** I will explain what that protection is in the next chapter.
4. **The balance inside tips the wrong way.** The bacteria that cause odour begin to multiply.
5. **The smell returns, sometimes stronger.** You conclude that you were not clean enough.
6. **You clean even harder.** And back to step 2 you go.

I call this the **Clean-Rebound Loop**. The harder you push down, the harder it bounces back.

Look at step 5 again, because it is the cruelest part. The loop makes you believe the answer is *more of the same thing*. Every time it fails, it blames *you*.

Why Washing Harder Makes It Worse

Let me use an example you already know from real life.

Think of Harmattan. Your hands get dry and cracked, and your lips split. Now imagine someone tells you, “Just wash your hands with a stronger soap.” You do. Your hands crack more. So you wash more.

Anyone can see the problem. The skin is not dirty. It is *damaged*, and the harsh soap is keeping it that way.

The same idea applies to the most delicate part of your body. It has its own natural way of staying healthy and balanced, and it does not need harsh cleaning. In fact, harsh cleaning is exactly what upsets it.

Here is the part that surprises most women: **the inside of the vagina cleans itself.** It has been doing this since long before soap was invented. What needs washing is only the outside, and gently, with plain warm water or a very mild, unscented product.

Everything else, meaning the products inside, the strong soaps, the antiseptics, and the “deep cleaning,” is at best unnecessary and at worst the very thing feeding the loop.

What About the Antibiotics?

Now let me talk about something that confuses a lot of women, and maybe you too.

Perhaps you went to the doctor or pharmacist. You were given antibiotics, you took them faithfully, and it worked. The smell went away. You felt like yourself again.

Then, maybe two weeks later, or a month, it came back.

And you thought, *Maybe I did not finish them properly. Maybe I did something wrong*.

I need you to hear this: **that is very common, and it is not your fault.**

Think of it like clearing bush around a compound. A man cuts the tall grass with a cutlass, and the compound looks clean. But if the roots are still in the ground, the grass is back within weeks. Cutting was not wrong, but it was only part of the job.

Antibiotics can be genuinely helpful, and in some cases they are exactly what you need. But they work on the *invaders*. They do not rebuild the natural protection that keeps those invaders from returning. And if the loop is still running at home, with the washing and the products, then the protection never gets a chance to recover.

So the smell comes back. The antibiotics did not fail. The *plan* was incomplete.

This is why I always say to women: never stop a course your doctor gave you because of what you read in a guide like this one. What I am offering is the part that usually gets left out, the part that supports your body *after and alongside* proper care.

The Remedies That Feel Right but Quietly Backfire

I want to be careful here, because I know many of us grew up with home remedies passed down with love. Nobody gave them to you to hurt you. They were passed on because everyone wanted to help.

But some common practices are known to disturb the natural balance. If you have used any of these, please do not blame yourself. You did what you were told, with good intentions.

Strong antiseptics like Dettol. These are made for surfaces and for skin, not for the delicate area we are talking about. They can irritate and strip away the good bacteria along with the bad.

Salt and hot water. It feels like it is “cleaning,” and the sting can seem like proof that it is working. But the sting is irritation, not healing.

Douching, or washing inside. Research links this to a higher chance of odour-causing imbalance. The body did not need the help.

Vaginal steaming. Popular in many places, but there is no good evidence that it helps, and it carries a real risk of burns and irritation.

Herbal inserts, “tightening” products, and similar items. These are often sold in markets and online with big promises. They can upset the natural balance, and nobody can be sure what is really in them.

Scented washes, wipes, and sprays. The scent covers the smell for a short time, while the chemicals often irritate and make the problem worse.

Here is a small exercise. Pull out that list you wrote after Chapter 1. Look at your starred items, the ones you do only because someone told you to. Do you see any of these on it? If you do, do not feel ashamed. Just circle

them. We will deal with each one in its time.

What Changes When You Stop Fighting Your Body

Now let me tell you what is actually possible, because I do not want to leave you sitting in a problem without a way out.

Imagine, in a few weeks, waking up and getting ready without the checking. No counting how many hours until you can freshen up. No pinned arms on the danfo. No dread when your husband reaches for you. No spare pants tucked at the bottom of your bag.

That is what this guide is for. **It will show you how to break the Clean-Rebound Loop, so you can feel fresh, calm, and confident again, without stronger soaps, endless antibiotics, or having to tell anyone.**

I will be honest with you. I cannot promise a cure, because I am not a doctor, and every body is different. But I can promise a clear explanation of what has been happening, and a gentle, step-by-step plan that works *with* your body instead of against it.

That plan is called the **Acid Shield Rebuild™**.

The Three Phases Ahead

The Acid Shield Rebuild™ has three simple phases. You do not need any special products, and most of what you need is already in your house.

Phase 1: Stop the Damage (Days 1-3). Before we add anything, we take away what has been hurting you. You will learn the five things that knock down your natural protection and how to remove them quickly.

Phase 2: Rebuild the Shield (Days 4-14). With the damage stopped, we give your body the conditions it needs to recover. It is a gentle daily routine, and it is very doable.

Phase 3: Protect the Shield (Ongoing). Once your balance returns, we teach you how to keep it, through period weeks, after intimacy, on long days, and when life gets busy.

Along the way, I will also show you how to tell whether something else is going on that needs a doctor's attention. This matters, because I never want you to keep treating yourself at home for something that needs proper care.

Before We Move On

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **the loop, not you, is the problem.** The more you scrub, the more your body's own defences are stripped away, and the more the trouble returns. The answer is not more cleaning. It is a different way of caring for your body.

But here is the question I know is forming in your mind. *What exactly is the protection I keep talking about? And how do I know if mine is damaged?*

That is where we go next. Inside your body, there is a tiny, powerful team of guards that has been protecting you all your life, whether you knew it or not. And I am going to show you how to meet them, how to take care of them, and how to get your first small win in the next thirty minutes.

CHAPTER 3

Your Body Already Has a Bodyguard

Last chapter, I showed you the Clean-Rebound Loop: scrub, strip, rise, return, scrub again. I also told you the loop keeps stripping away something your body needs. Now let's meet it.

If you circled anything on your list after the last chapter, keep it nearby. In a few minutes you will know exactly what to do about it.

Meet Your Guards

Think of a compound with a good gateman. He sits at the entrance all day and all night. He knows who belongs and who does not. Thieves rarely get past him.

Now imagine that one day someone decides the gateman is "not clean enough" and sends him away. The gate is open. Within a week, trouble walks in.

That is what happens inside your body when the loop keeps running.

Inside a healthy vagina lives a team of friendly bacteria, called **lactobacilli**. Their job is to guard the place. They make a mild natural acid, and that acid keeps the environment slightly sour, around pH 3.8 to 4.5. Most odour-causing bacteria cannot thrive in that kind of environment.

I call this natural protection your **acid shield**. You have had it since your teenage years, and it works quietly all day without asking for anything.

The shield's only weakness is that it is delicate. Harsh soap, Dettol, douching, and antiseptics all pull down the acid, and the guards die off. The gate opens, and the odour-causing bacteria move in and multiply.

Nothing is wrong with you. Your gateman was chased away, and he simply needs to come back.

What "Normal" Actually Smells Like

I need to tell you something that may surprise you, because I do not want you chasing something impossible.

A healthy body is not odourless. A mild, natural scent is normal. You will also see some discharge, and it can change through the month, from clear and stretchy to whitish and thicker. That is your body keeping itself clean and healthy.

Many women wash constantly because they think the goal is to smell like nothing at all. That goal does not exist. The goal is to have a mild, natural scent that does not bother you or anyone else. That is completely achievable.

Your First 30 Minutes: Do This Today

I promised you a quick win, so here it is. It takes about half an hour, and you do not need to buy anything.

Do this today, before you read another chapter.

1. **Stop everything that goes inside.** No douching, no washing inside with fingers or a cloth, no steaming, and no herbal inserts or "tightening" products. Your body cleans the inside itself.
2. **Take out the Dettol, salt, and strong soap.** Put them in a bag, tie it, and move it out of the bathroom for now. Out of sight makes it easier to stop.

3. **Wash the outside only, and only with plain warm water.** If you want to use soap, choose a mild, unscented one, and use it on the outer skin only, never inside. Twice a day is plenty, once in the morning and once at night.
4. **Pat dry gently.** Use a clean towel, and pat, do not rub. Moisture that stays behind feeds the wrong bacteria.
5. **Change what you are wearing next to your skin.** Put on clean, dry, cotton underwear. Take out any scented pads, liners, or wet wipes from your bag for now.
6. **Set the bag with your spare underwear and sprays aside.** You may still need a spare pair on a hard day, but you can stop spraying and wiping.

That is the whole list.

I want to be honest about what to expect. This is not an overnight cure, and I would be lying if I said so. What many women notice first is less burning and irritation, less checking, and the strange relief of *not fighting* for the first time in months. The deeper changes come over the next two weeks, and we will walk through them together.

Where Is the Smell Really Coming From?

Now let me help you with something almost nobody talks about. Not every smell comes from the same place, and treating the wrong one is one of the biggest reasons women stay stuck.

Read through the five zones below. Beside each one, think about whether it sounds like you.

Zone 1: Sweat and skin. The smell is more like body sweat than anything else, and it is strongest in the groin folds and inner thighs, especially in hot weather, after exercise, or after long hours in tight clothes. It usually eases after a proper outer wash and a change of dry clothing. This is a heat and moisture issue, not an infection.

Zone 2: The discharge zone. The smell is often described as fishy. You may notice thin, greyish or whitish discharge, and it often gets stronger after your period or after intimacy. This pattern can point to an imbalance called bacterial vaginosis, which is the very thing the acid shield is meant to prevent. It is common, and it is worth getting tested so you know for sure.

Zone 3: The urine zone. The smell is sharper, closer to ammonia. You might leak a few drops when you laugh, cough, or sneeze, or feel a burning when you pass urine. Small leaks that dry in your underwear can create a smell that feels like it is coming from somewhere else.

Zone 4: The back-door zone. A faint smell, or small traces of stool, especially if you struggle with piles, wipe from back to front, or have irregular bowels. This is a hygiene and habit issue, and it is easier to fix than you think.

Zone 5: The "something is wrong" zone. A very strong, foul, rotten smell, often with dark or brownish discharge, and sometimes pain or fever. A forgotten tampon or an infection can cause this, and it needs a doctor quickly, not a home routine.

Many women find that they belong to more than one zone. That is normal, and it is exactly why guessing does not work. Write down which zones sound most like you, and keep it beside your list from Chapter 1.

When to See a Doctor First

I said in the beginning that I would tell you clearly when it is time to go. This is that moment, and I want you to read it carefully.

Please see a doctor, nurse, or reputable clinic before starting the plan, or as soon as you can, if you notice any of the following:

- Discharge that is yellow, green, frothy, or grey, or has a very strong or foul smell
- Itching, burning, or soreness that does not settle
- Pain in your lower belly, or pain during intimacy
- Fever, or feeling generally unwell
- Bleeding between periods or after intimacy
- Sores, blisters, or lumps in the area
- Burning when you pass urine, or needing to go all the time
- A smell that started after a new partner, or after an IUD or another device was fitted
- A strong smell with dark or brownish discharge, especially if you might have left a tampon in
- You are pregnant and you notice any change or smell
- This has come back three or more times in a year

Going to a doctor does not mean you did anything wrong. It means you are taking your body seriously.

When you go, you can say something simple like: *"I have had a recurring smell and discharge, and I would like to be tested for the cause."* Ask about testing, not only treatment. If you are given antibiotics, ask what you can do afterwards to support your body's natural balance. That last question is the gap most women never know to ask about.

If you feel shy, remember that a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist hears this every single week. You are not the first, and you will not be the last.

Before You Turn the Page

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **you already have a bodyguard, and the loop has been chasing it away.** The plan is not to attack anything. It is to stop what is harming your guards and give them room to come back.

You have your first 30 minutes done or ready to do. You know what to look for and when to get help. Now comes something I need to say properly before we go any further.

In the next chapter, I want to talk about the natural remedies so many of us grew up with, steaming, herbal inserts, alum, and the rest. I owe them a fairer explanation than I have given so far, and I want to show you where the natural approach still has a real, honest place in this plan.

CHAPTER 4

What Our Mothers Reached For, and What Still Helps

Last chapter, you met your acid shield. You learned that a healthy body isn't odourless, and you got your first 30-minute quick win. I also gave you the doctor red-flag list, so you know when this needs more than a routine.

Before we go further, I want to stop and talk about something I skipped past too quickly earlier. And I owe you an apology for that.

I Judged Something I Should Have Explained

In Chapter 2, I listed the things that quietly backfire: Dettol, salt water, steaming, herbal inserts, "tightening" herbs. I told you they hurt more than they help. That is still true, and I am not taking it back.

But I said it the way an outsider would say it. Like the whole tradition was foolish. That was not fair, and it is not what I believe.

Our mothers and grandmothers did not reach for herbs because they were careless. They reached for herbs because herbs are *real*. Bitter leaf clears the blood. Uziza warms the body after birth. Scent leaf settles the stomach. Zobo cools you in the heat. This knowledge fed and healed generations before any hospital was built in our towns. It deserves respect, not a lecture.

So the question was never "herbs or no herbs." The real question is: **where should the natural approach be aimed?**

Why Steaming and Herbal Inserts Feel Like They Should Work

Let me walk through the logic, because it is not foolish logic at all.

Steaming feels like it should work because heat and steam clean everything else in the home. You steam a pot to sterilise it. Why not steam the body?

Herbal inserts feel like they should work because herbs heal everywhere else on the body. If bitter leaf can clear your blood, why can't a herbal leaf clear an infection?

Alum and tightening sticks feel like they should work because they are old, trusted, and your aunty swears by them.

Here is the part nobody explained to the women who use them. Remember your acid shield from the last chapter, that team of friendly bacteria keeping things gently acidic? Steam, heat, and strong herbal preparations do not politely clear out only the "bad" bacteria. They disturb the whole shield, good guards and all. Alum and tightening herbs are often astringent, meaning they pull and tighten tissue, which can tear the delicate skin without you feeling it happen. And once the shield is disturbed, you are back in the Clean-Rebound Loop from Chapter 2, just wearing a different outfit.

This is not a failure of tradition. It is a case of aiming a real tool at the wrong target.

Traditional Remedies, Honestly Reviewed

I want to walk through the common ones honestly, the way I wish someone had done for me.

Remedy	Why women turn to it	What it actually does to your shield
Steaming (herbal or plain)	Feels cleansing, a ritual passed down, believed to “clear” the womb	Heat and moisture disturb your shield’s balance, and there is a real risk of burns
Herbal inserts and leaves	Herbs heal elsewhere, so it feels natural to insert them	Disturbs the shield directly, and can introduce new irritation or infection
Alum (potash) or tightening sticks	Trusted by elders, believed to “tighten” and “clean”	Astringent and can tear delicate tissue without immediate pain
Saltwater rinse	Feels like the sting means it’s working	The sting is irritation, not healing, and it disrupts the shield’s pH
Garlic, inserted	A popular tip passed woman to woman, garlic fights infection in food	Raw garlic against internal tissue can burn and irritate, and there is no good evidence it treats the cause
Native black soap (ose dudu), used internally	A trusted traditional cleanser for skin	Too strong for this delicate area, even though it is gentle on other skin

I want to say this clearly: **you were not foolish for using any of these.** You were doing what generations of women taught you, in good faith, because it was the knowledge you were given. Now you have new information. That is all that has changed.

The Natural Support Toolkit You Can Actually Use

Here is where the natural approach still has a real, honest place, taken by mouth, never inserted. This is not a cure, and I will not pretend it is. But it supports the same body you are trying to help.

Zobo (hibiscus tea). Cold or warm, unsweetened where you can manage it. It is hydrating and rich in antioxidants, and hydration supports your whole body, including your shield.

Moringa. Whether as leaf, powder in soup, or tea, moringa is nutrient-dense and widely used across the continent to support general strength and immunity.

Ginger tea. Good for digestion and general immune support, and a gentle, everyday habit worth keeping.

Garlic, in your food. Cooked or raw in your meals, garlic is a genuinely healthy food. Eat it in your soup, your sauce, your stew. Just never insert it. There is no good evidence that inserting garlic treats the cause of odour or discharge, and doctors across the world, including here in Nigeria, advise against it because of the burn and irritation risk.

Fermented foods. You will meet these again in the Rebuild chapter ahead: plain yoghurt and ogi. They support your general gut health, which is connected to your whole body’s balance, acid shield included.

Rest and lower stress. Not glamorous, and not herbal, but our elders always tied good health to peace of mind, and they were right. A tired, stressed body struggles to protect itself.

None of these are a substitute for your doctor, and none of them replace the plan in this guide. Think of them as feeding your body well while your shield rebuilds, the same way you would eat well while recovering from any illness.

Before We Move On

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **your instinct to reach for something natural was never wrong.** It only needed a new direction, inward through your food and your daily habits, not inward through your body.

You now understand your shield, and you understand why the old remedies worked against it without meaning to. You are ready to stop the damage properly.

In the next chapter, we begin Phase 1. You will walk through your own home, room by room, to find what has been quietly working against you, and you will start replacing it with the gentler habits this chapter has already begun preparing you for.

CHAPTER 5

Phase 1, Stop the Damage (Days 1-3)

Last chapter, we talked honestly about the natural remedies so many of us grew up with, and why the real answer is feeding your body well, not inserting anything. You also met your acid shield in Chapter 3, did your first 30-minute quick win, and worked out which of the five smell zones sounded most like you. If any red flag applied to you, please book that appointment now, before you continue.

Now we start Phase 1. Its whole purpose is one thing: **stop feeding the problem.**

First We Fix the Roof

Imagine it is the rainy season and water is dripping through your ceiling. You would not go and buy new paint for the room. You would fix the leak first.

That is why Phase 1 adds almost nothing. We are not building yet. We are finding what has been quietly knocking down your acid shield, and taking it away.

I have found that five things do most of the damage. I call them the **5 Shield Breakers.** Some you already know about. Others hide in plain sight.

Shield Breaker 1: Over-Cleaning

You already met this one in Chapter 2, so I will keep it short. Dettol, salt water, douching, steaming, strong soaps, scented washes, and wipes all pull your natural balance down.

If you did your quick win in the last chapter, you have already started removing this one. Keep going.

Shield Breaker 2: Alkaline Triggers

Your acid shield keeps the vagina slightly sour. Two natural things are *less* acidic than that: **semen and period blood.**

Neither is dirty or wrong. When your shield is healthy, it handles them easily. But when it is already weak, these can tip the balance, and that is one reason some women notice the smell after their period or after intimacy.

This does not mean you should stop being close to your husband. It means we work with the timing.

- After intimacy, pass urine and rinse the outside only with warm water.
- During your period, change your pad every three to four hours, even if it does not feel full.
- While you rebuild, ask your doctor whether using condoms for a few weeks could help you. Some research suggests it may.

Shield Breaker 3: Trapped Heat and Moisture

The wrong bacteria love warm, damp places. And in our climate, that is easy to create.

Think of a long day in Lagos traffic. You sit for hours in a hot car or on a packed bus, in tight jeans or leggings, in synthetic underwear that does not let anything breathe. By evening, the area is warm, damp, and closed in. It is the perfect place for trouble.

The same goes for pads left in too long, gym clothes worn after a workout, and underwear put on before it is fully dry.

Shield Breaker 4: Irritants

These are the things touching your skin that you never think about.

Scented pads and panty liners. Detergent that is too strong for underwear. Fabric softener. Wet wipes with fragrance. Skin that is irritated from shaving or waxing. Even a rough lace fabric.

Irritated skin cannot protect itself well, and your acid shield suffers with it.

Shield Breaker 5: Everyday Stressors

This one surprised me too when I first learned it. Long-term stress, poor sleep, and smoking can all affect your body's defences, including the ones down there.

There are also a few things only a doctor can check, such as whether a contraceptive device like an IUD could be playing a part, or whether blood sugar problems are involved. We will come back to these in Phase 2. For now, just know that if the problem stays stubborn after you have done everything in this guide, those are good questions to raise.

The 48-Hour Hidden Trigger Trail

Now we go hunting. For the next two days, I want you to walk through your home, room by room, like a detective. You are looking for anything that might be feeding the loop.

I will tell you about Chioma. When she did this audit, she found three things she never suspected. Her fabric softener, which she used on everything including her underwear. A box of scented panty liners she wore daily. And a bathing sponge she had been using for months, which never fully dried.

"I thought I was being extra clean," she said. "I was actually bringing the problem into my own bathroom."

She was not careless. Nobody had ever told her to look there.

Here is your trail. Take your time and tick each item.

In the bathroom:

1. Remove Dettol, salt, and any strong or scented washes from anywhere near your intimate care.
2. Throw away your bathing sponge or loofah, or wash it well and dry it fully in the sun. Better still, use a fresh clean cloth each time.
3. Check your towel. Use a clean, dry towel for the outside of your body, wash it often, and dry it fully in the sun. A towel that stays damp is a home for bacteria.

On the laundry line:

4. Wash your underwear separately, using a mild detergent. Rinse it very well, more than once, so no soap is left behind.
5. Stop using fabric softener on underwear.
6. **Dry your underwear fully in the sun and fresh air, never indoors while damp.** In the rainy season, use a fan or a well-ventilated room.

7. **Iron your underwear once it is dry.** Many of us already do this to keep off tumbu fly eggs, and it has a second benefit: it makes sure the fabric is completely dry.

In your wardrobe:

8. Count how many pairs of underwear you own are cotton and how many are synthetic, like nylon, polyester, or lace. Aim for mostly cotton, in the days ahead.
9. Set aside the tightest jeans and leggings for now, especially for long work days and hot weather.

In your handbag:

10. Take out scented pads, liners, wet wipes, and body sprays.
11. If you need a spare pair of underwear, keep it clean and dry in a small cotton bag, not in plastic. Plastic traps damp air and can make the underwear smell.

To make this easier, here are the swaps in one place.

Instead of this...	Do this...
Dettol, salt, strong soap	Plain warm water, outside only
Scented pads and liners	Unscented pads, changed every 3 to 4 hours
Synthetic or lace underwear	Cotton underwear
Fabric softener on underwear	Mild detergent and a good rinse
Underwear dried damp indoors	Fully dried in the sun, then ironed
Old bathing sponge	A fresh clean cloth each time
Plastic bag for a spare pair	A small cotton pouch

Your Three Days

Let me put it into a simple plan so you never wonder what to do.

Day 1: Continue your 30-minute quick win. Remove the bathroom items and clear your handbag.

Day 2: Do the laundry and wardrobe part of the trail. Wash, dry, and iron your underwear properly, and put out the cotton pairs.

Day 3: Go through your routine one last time. Tick off everything on the trail, then check your list from Chapter 1 to see which starred items you have now removed.

What You May Notice

I want to prepare you for these three days, so nothing surprises you.

Some women feel calmer almost at once, with less burning and less irritation. Others notice very little, and that is fine too, because the real rebuilding happens in the next phase. Your body needs time to settle after years of being pushed around.

One thing matters a lot: **do not add anything new right now.** No new soaps, teas, creams, or “special” products. The point of these three days is to take away, not to add.

And if something feels *worse*, with stronger discharge, pain, itching, or a foul smell, do not push through. Go back to the doctor list in Chapter 3 and get checked.

Before We Go On

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **you do not have to fight your body. You only have to stop getting in its way.** The five Shield Breakers were not your fault, and most of them were things nobody told you about. You now know them, and you have already started removing them.

But taking away the damage is only the first half. Once the harm has stopped, your body needs the right conditions to bring its guards back. In the next chapter, I will give you a gentle daily routine for the next eleven days, from morning to night. I will show you the food, water, and sleep habits that support your body, the honest truth about probiotics and what to ask your doctor, and the simple tracker that lets you see your progress for yourself. This is where the shield starts to come back.

CHAPTER 6

Phase 2, Rebuild the Shield (Days 4-14)

Last chapter, you did the 48-hour Hidden Trigger Trail. You went through your bathroom, your laundry line, your wardrobe, and your handbag, and you took away the things that were knocking down your acid shield. If you finished it, well done. That was the hardest part.

Now your body has some breathing room, and this is where the real rebuilding begins.

Clearing the Land, Then Planting

Picture a farmer who has just cleared a plot of land. The bush is gone and the stones are out. If he leaves it bare, the weeds will return. So he plants, waters gently, and lets the crops grow.

You have cleared the land. Now we help the good bacteria settle back in.

There is one thing that farmer never does. He does not dig up the seedlings every morning to see if the roots have grown. That would kill them.

Many women do the equivalent without realising. They sniff, check, wipe, and inspect all day long. The worry itself becomes a habit, and it keeps you in the loop.

So here is your first rule for this phase: **the no-checking rule.** You may check how you are doing once a day, in the evening, when you fill in your tracker. That is all. If the urge comes at other times, breathe out slowly and carry on with what you were doing.

Your Gentle Daily Routine

This routine is short and calm. Use it every day from Day 4 to Day 14.

In the morning:

1. Wash the outside only with plain warm water. Use a mild unscented soap on the outer skin if you like, never inside.
2. Pat dry gently with a clean, dry towel.
3. Put on clean cotton underwear that has been fully dried and ironed.
4. Drink a full glass of water before you drink tea, coffee, or anything else.
5. If you use a pad or liner, make sure it is unscented.

During the day:

1. Keep drinking water. Aim for six to eight glasses, more on hot days. A bottle beside you makes this easier.
2. Change any pad or liner every three to four hours.
3. Whenever you can, avoid sitting for hours in tight, sweaty clothes. Stand up, stretch, and walk a little.
4. When you use the toilet, wipe from front to back, always.
5. Skip the sprays, wipes, and midday “freshening up”. Your body does not need them.

In the evening:

1. Wash the outside again with warm water, then pat dry.
2. Change out of your work clothes, especially anything tight or synthetic.
3. Fill in your tracker (you will find it below).

At night:

1. Wear loose cotton underwear to bed, or none at all if you feel comfortable, so the area can breathe.
2. Try to sleep by a regular time. Your body repairs itself while you rest.

That is the whole routine. It takes a few minutes a day.

Feeding the Guards

What you eat will not fix this on its own, and I will not pretend it does. But a few simple habits support your body while it recovers.

Drink water. This is the easiest one and the one most of us forget. Water helps your body flush and stay balanced.

Go easy on sugar. Soft drinks, malt drinks, sweet biscuits, and too much sweet bread can push blood sugar up. High blood sugar is linked with some vaginal problems, especially yeast infections. You do not need to cut sweet things out completely. Just notice how much you take in.

Eat plenty of fibre. Beans, ugu, efo riro, pawpaw, banana, watermelon, and whole grains keep your bowels regular. This helps the "back-door zone" we talked about in Chapter 3, because regular bowels are easier to keep clean.

Eat regular meals. Skipping meals and then overeating stresses the body. Simple, steady meals are better.

Enjoy fermented foods if you like them. Plain yoghurt and ogi (fermented pap) are good for general gut health. To be honest, nobody has proven that eating them cures this problem. Eat them because they are good foods, not because they are a fix. And **never put yoghurt, garlic, or any food inside your body.** This is a popular idea, and it can cause irritation and infection.

The Honest Truth About Probiotics

You have probably seen probiotic products advertised, some of them for exactly this problem. Let me tell you what I know, without hype.

Some studies suggest that certain types of *Lactobacillus* probiotics, taken by mouth or used vaginally, may help reduce the chance of the problem returning, especially after antibiotics. But the research is mixed. Some studies show a benefit and others do not. The results also depend on the specific strain, and many products sold online do not say which strain they contain.

So my honest advice is this: **do not spend a lot of money on a probiotic because an advert promised a cure.** If you are curious, take the question to a pharmacist or doctor and ask: *"Is there a probiotic with good evidence for someone like me, and which one?"*

They can tell you what is worth trying and what is not. That one question can save you a lot of money.

If You Have Just Taken Antibiotics (Or Are Taking Them Now)

If your doctor has prescribed antibiotics, please finish the full course exactly as instructed. Do not stop early because of anything in this guide.

If your doctor has prescribed a medicine called metronidazole, ask your pharmacist about alcohol. It can make you feel very unwell if you drink while taking it, and for a short time afterwards.

Here are the questions I encourage every woman to ask, because most are never told to:

1. *"What exactly did my test show?"* Ask for the name, so you can look it up or repeat it.
2. *"What should I do after the antibiotics finish to help my body recover?"*
3. *"If this comes back, what is the next step? Are there longer-term options for repeat cases?"*
4. *"Is there anything about my contraceptive, my blood sugar, or my routine that could be involved?"*
5. *"Should my partner be checked or treated?"* Sometimes this matters, and the doctor can advise.

Write your answers down. A good doctor will not mind.

Your Day-by-Day Tracker

Now let me give you the tool that makes the whole thing real. A tracker lets you see progress you would otherwise miss, because when we worry, we forget the good days.

Each evening, take two minutes to fill in one row. Use the 0 to 5 scale for "How I feel" (0 means no worry at all, 5 means the worst it has been).

Day	Morning routine done?	Evening routine done?	Glasses of water	Hours of sleep	How I feel (0-5)	Notes (period? intimacy? tight clothes? stress?)
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						

How to Read Your Progress

Here is something I want you to understand before you start. **Your progress will not be a straight line.** You may have three good days, then a bad one. That does not mean you have failed. It means your body is finding its balance.

Look at the trend, not the single day. Compare Day 4 with Day 14. Is the overall number lower? Are the good days more frequent? Are you checking less?

Let me tell you what Chioma noticed. By Day 6, nothing much had changed and she almost gave up. On Day 9 she noticed she had gone the whole afternoon without thinking about it. She only realised because she saw the gap in her notes.

“That’s when I knew,” she said. “I had stopped standing guard.”

That is what progress often looks like first. The worry quietens down before anything else does.

If, by Day 14, things are the same or worse, or if you have any of the red flags from Chapter 3 at any point, please go and get tested. That is not failure. It means your body needs a different kind of help, and now you have good notes to show your doctor.

Before You Move On

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **rebuilding is gentle, steady, and boring, and that is exactly why it works.** Your guards do not come back because of a miracle product. They come back when you stop disturbing them and give them a calm, dry, balanced home.

Eleven days from now, you will know a great deal about how your body responds. But there is one more thing I want to prepare you for, because it is the part most guides ignore. What about after Day 14? What happens when your period comes, or when you are close to your husband again, or when you spend a hot day at a long church programme or travel for hours?

That is where a rebuilt shield either stays strong or gets knocked down again. In the next chapter, I will show you how to protect it, day by day, in real life. I will also teach you to catch a relapse in the first two days, before it turns into another round of the loop. And I will help you find the words to talk to your husband, without shame and without blame.

CHAPTER 7

Phase 3, Protect the Shield (Ongoing)

Last chapter, you followed the gentle daily routine for eleven days. You watched your tracker, practised the no-checking rule, and learned which questions to ask your doctor. If you have made it this far, that is real progress, and I hope you feel proud.

But here is the truth about a rebuilt shield: it is like a new fence around your compound. Strong, but it still needs looking after. So in this chapter, we learn to protect it in real life, where periods come, husbands come home, and church programmes go on until midnight.

The Shield in Real Life

Think about a house after you have fixed the roof. You do not fix it once and forget it. Before every rainy season, you check the gutters and look for small cracks. A little attention early stops a big leak later.

Your shield works the same way. The good news is that protecting it takes far less effort than rebuilding it. You only need a few habits for the moments when the shield is most likely to be knocked down.

Your Period Week

Remember from Chapter 5 that period blood is less acidic than your shield. Nothing is wrong with that. It only means this week needs a little extra care.

1. **Change your pad every three to four hours,** even if it does not feel full. A pad that stays too long becomes warm and damp.
2. **Use unscented pads only.** Scented ones can irritate the skin.
3. **If you use tampons, change them every four to eight hours, and never sleep past that.** Write down when you put one in so you never forget. A forgotten tampon is one of the most common causes of a very strong, foul smell.
4. **If you use a menstrual cup, wash it well with mild soap and hot water between uses,** and boil it at the end of each period.
5. **Wash the outside with plain warm water twice a day,** just as in your routine. Nothing more.
6. **Wear cotton underwear,** and change it if it gets damp.

Many women notice that the days right after a period are the ones where trouble tends to start. Give your tracker an extra note on those days, so you begin to see your own pattern.

After Intimacy

Being close to your husband should feel safe and natural, and I never want this guide to make you afraid of it. A few small habits protect your shield without spoiling anything.

1. **Pass urine soon after.** This helps clear bacteria near the opening and lowers the chance of a urinary infection.
2. **Rinse the outside only with warm water.** Do not wash inside.
3. **Change into clean, dry cotton underwear afterwards.**

4. **If you use a lubricant, choose a plain, unscented, water-based one.** Perfumed or flavoured products can irritate.
5. **Ask your doctor whether condoms could help you for a few weeks while your shield recovers.** Semen is less acidic than your shield, and some women find that using them helps.

If intimacy is uncomfortable or painful at any point, please tell your doctor. That is a separate matter, and it deserves proper attention.

Gym Days

If you exercise, well done. Movement is good for you. The only problem is what happens *after*.

Change out of your sweaty clothes within thirty minutes. Do not sit around in damp leggings while you chat or drive home. Pack a clean, dry pair of cotton underwear in your gym bag, just for this.

Wear breathable fabrics when you can. Rinse the outside with plain water if you can, pat dry, and change.

Long Church Days and Travel

I know this one well. There is the all-night vigil. The long Sunday service, followed by a visit, followed by another. The owambe that starts at noon and ends after dark. The journey from Lagos to Enugu that takes ten hours because of the traffic.

Here is how to get through them without knocking down your shield.

1. **Wear loose, breathable clothes and cotton underwear.** A wrapper or a flowing skirt is kinder than skinny jeans.
2. **Carry water and drink it.** Many women avoid drinking on long journeys because they are afraid of the toilet. Sip regularly anyway. Your body needs it.
3. **Pack a small cotton pouch** with one clean pair of underwear, and unscented pads if you need them. Skip the spray.
4. **Stand up and walk for a few minutes whenever you can.** Every hour on a long trip is ideal.
5. **When you get home, wash the outside gently, change into fresh cotton, and let your body rest.**

Spotting a Relapse in the First Two Days

Now to the part I care about most. Even with the best habits, a hard week, a stressful month, or a course of antibiotics for something else can nudge your shield off balance.

What matters is that you catch it *early*. In the first two days, it is easy to correct. After two weeks, it has become the loop again.

Here are the early-warning signs. Watch for any of these:

- A slight change in your usual scent that lasts more than a day
- A change in your discharge, such as a different colour, thickness, or amount
- New itching or mild irritation
- You feel the old urge to check, wipe, or wash more than usual
- You have started reaching for a product from the old routine

If you notice any one of these, do not panic, and **do not reach for the Dettol.** That is the old habit, and it is exactly what the loop wants you to do.

Instead, follow this simple reset:

1. **Go back to Phase 1 for 48 hours.** Plain warm water, cotton underwear, no products, no checking.
2. **Look at your tracker and ask what changed.** Was it your period, a long trip, a new soap, a stressful week, a tight outfit? Once you spot the trigger, you can avoid it next time.
3. **Give it two days.** Many small wobbles settle by themselves when the damage stops.
4. **If it is not improving after two to three days, or you have any red flag from Chapter 3, see a doctor.** Do not wait for it to get worse.

Also, if this has come back three or more times in a year even with all these habits, that is important to raise. Ask your doctor about longer-term options for repeat cases. Some women need extra medical support, and that is not a failure. It means your body needs more than a routine can give.

Talking to Your Husband

Now I want to talk about the thing that may be sitting heaviest on your heart. You may still be carrying the memory of that silence.

Let me tell you about Chioma again. When she reached Day 14, she felt a lot calmer. But she still had not said a word to her husband.

"I felt like I owed him an explanation," she told me. "But I was scared it would sound like an excuse. Or that he would think I was accusing him."

She decided to tell him, on her own terms. She chose a quiet evening, at home, with no phone and no children around. She started softly.

I want to give you the same simple approach.

1. Choose the right moment. Not in bed, not during an argument, and not when he is tired or hungry. A calm moment, maybe after a meal, is best.

2. Start with how you feel, not what he did. For example: *"There is something that has been worrying me, and I would like to share it with you. It has nothing to do with you doing anything wrong."*

3. Keep it simple and honest. For example: *"I have been struggling with a health issue that has made me feel self-conscious. I did not know how to say it, so I pulled away. I am sorry if that hurt you."*

4. Tell him what you are doing about it. For example: *"I have learned a lot about it, and I am following a plan to take care of it. I may also see a doctor."*

5. Tell him what would help. For example: *"What would help me most is your patience while I sort it out."*

6. Let him respond. He may be relieved. He may have been worried you were unhappy with him. Many husbands are far more understanding than we expect.

If he asks whether he needs to do anything, say that your doctor can advise. In some cases, a partner may need checking too, depending on the cause. Nobody needs to be blamed for that.

If you are not ready to talk yet, that is okay. You can start with something small, like *"I am working on a health matter and it is getting better."* You do not have to say everything on the first day.

What Chioma told me afterwards has stayed with me. “The silence that scared me so much was not disgust,” she said. “He was just afraid I was upset with him. We had both been carrying the same fear, alone.”

Before You Turn the Page

So if you take nothing else from this chapter, remember this: **protecting your shield is not about being perfect. It is about catching small problems early, and being kind to yourself when you slip.** You do not have to be flawless. You only have to know what to do when something changes.

You now have the whole system. You know the loop, you have met the shield, you have stopped the damage, rebuilt the balance, and learned how to protect it. What you need now is one clear picture that pulls it all together, so that you never have to wonder what to do or in what order.

In the final chapter, I will give you exactly that: a simple “start here, do this, then this” roadmap for your first day, your first three days, your first two weeks, and your first month. I will also give you a one-page cheat sheet you can screenshot and keep on your phone. And I will tell you what to do on the days when it does not go to plan, because those days come to everyone.

CHAPTER 8

Your Day 1 Roadmap

Last chapter, you learned how to protect your shield through period weeks, long church days, and the small wobbles that come to everyone. You also found the words to talk to your husband. Now you have the whole system, and I want to put it in one place so you never have to wonder what to do next.

Here is the plan in the order you will use it.

Your First 24 Hours

Do these today. You do not need to wait for a "good time."

1. **Check the red-flag list from Chapter 3.** If any of it applies to you, book a clinic visit first. Ask for testing, not only treatment.
2. **Do your 30-minute quick win.** Stop everything that goes inside. Put the Dettol, salt, and strong soaps out of the bathroom. Wash the outside only, with plain warm water, twice a day.
3. **Put on clean, dry cotton underwear.** Take scented pads, liners, and wipes out of your handbag.
4. **Take out the list you wrote after Chapter 1.** Circle everything you have already stopped.
5. **Write down which of the five smell zones sounds most like you.**

That is all for today. If you did nothing else, you have already started.

Days 1 to 3: Stop the Damage

Walk your home like a detective. Do the 48-hour Hidden Trigger Trail from Chapter 5: bathroom, laundry line, wardrobe, and handbag.

Throw away or fully dry the sponge. Wash underwear with a mild detergent and rinse it well. No fabric softener. Dry it fully in the sun, then iron it. Set aside your tightest, most synthetic clothes for now.

Add nothing new. No new soaps, teas, or products. These three days are for taking away.

Days 4 to 14: Rebuild the Shield

Follow the gentle daily routine from Chapter 6, morning to night.

- Wash the outside twice a day with warm water, and pat dry.
- Drink six to eight glasses of water.
- Change any pad every three to four hours.
- Keep to the no-checking rule: once a day, in the evening, when you fill in your tracker.
- Write down your doctor's answers if you went for a test.

On Day 14, compare your tracker with Day 4. Look at the trend, not one day.

Days 15 to 30: Protect the Shield

Keep the routine simple and use your protection habits for the moments that matter: period week, after intimacy, gym days, and long trips. Keep filling in the tracker, and add a note whenever something changes.

If you feel ready, this is a good time to talk to your husband, using the words from Chapter 7. Choose a calm moment, start with how you feel, and tell him what you are doing about it.

At the end of Day 30, sit down with your tracker and ask three questions. Are the good days more frequent? Am I checking less? Do I feel calmer in my own skin? If the answer to all three is yes, you are on the right path. If not, take your notes to a doctor. They will be very useful.

What to Do on the Days It Does Not Go to Plan

Some days will go wrong. You will be tired and reach for the old soap. Your period will come early in the middle of a long journey. You will feel the smell, or imagine it, and your hand will already be on the Dettol before you notice.

When this happens, do not tell yourself you have failed. You have not. The loop has been running for months, maybe years, and it will try to pull you back.

Do this instead:

1. **Pause.** Take a breath and put the product down.
2. **Wash the outside with plain warm water.** Nothing more.
3. **Put on clean, dry cotton and carry on with your day.**
4. **Write one line in your tracker** about what happened and what triggered it.
5. **Start again tomorrow morning.** One slip does not undo your progress.

The women who succeed are not the ones who never slip. They are the ones who come back the next day.

Your One-Page Cheat Sheet

Screenshot this page and keep it on your phone.

THE ACID SHIELD REBUILD™: QUICK REFERENCE

Remember: You are not dirty. You have been over-cleaning.

Every day

- Wash the outside only, with plain warm water, twice a day
- Pat dry, and wear clean cotton underwear
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water
- Change pads every 3 to 4 hours (unscented only)
- Wipe front to back
- Check in once a day, in the evening

Never

- Dettol, salt, or strong soaps
- Douching, washing inside, or steaming
- Herbal inserts or “tightening” products
- Scented pads, wipes, or sprays
- Fabric softener on underwear
- Underwear dried damp indoors

The 5 Shield Breakers

1. Over-cleaning
2. Alkaline triggers (period and semen)
3. Trapped heat and moisture
4. Irritants
5. Everyday stressors

After intimacy

Pass urine, rinse the outside only, and change into dry cotton.

Long days and travel

Loose clothes, sip water, a clean spare in a cotton pouch, and stand or walk every hour.

Early-warning signs of a relapse

A change in scent for more than a day, different discharge, new itching, or the urge to check and wash more. If you notice one, go back to Phase 1 for 48 hours.

See a doctor if you have

Yellow, green, frothy, or grey discharge; a very strong foul smell; itching or burning that does not settle; pelvic pain; fever; bleeding between periods; sores or lumps; pain when passing urine; a smell after starting a new partner or having a device fitted; a possible forgotten tampon; pregnancy with any change; or three or more repeats in a year.

Where You Are Now

Let me tell you how Chioma is doing.

A few weeks after she finished the plan, she messaged me. She had been to a wedding, an all-day one, with the heat, the long tables, and the dancing. Before, she would have planned the whole day around the toilet.

“I forgot to check,” she said. “I only realised on the drive home. I was so busy laughing.”

That is what I want for you. Not perfection, and not a body that never changes. I want you to laugh at a wedding without thinking about yourself for one moment.

So if you take nothing else from this whole guide, remember this: **you were never dirty, and you were never broken.** You were caught in a loop that nobody explained, and now you can see it clearly. You know what your body needs, and you know what to do when something changes.

Be patient with yourself. Be gentle with your body. And be proud of the woman who kept looking for answers when it would have been easier to stay quiet.

You have got this.

About the Author

Adaeze Okonkwo is a women's wellness writer who turns medical research on intimate health into plain, shame-free guidance. She has spent years listening to women across Nigeria and the diaspora describe the private struggles they cannot say out loud, and she writes for the woman who has been told to wash harder when she really needed to be told why.

Her approach is simple: explain what is happening in the body in everyday language, take the shame out of the conversation, and give women clear, gentle steps they can follow at home, while always encouraging them to seek proper medical care when they need it.

Adaeze believes that no woman should have to suffer in silence over something that is common, understandable, and manageable.

What to Do Next

Here is how to keep the momentum going after you close this guide.

- **Keep your tracker going for a full month.** Small patterns show up over weeks, not days.
- **Keep your cheat sheet on your phone,** and screenshot it again if you lose it.
- **Book that doctor's visit if you have not.** If any red flag applies to you, or if you have had three or more episodes this year, do not wait. Take your tracker notes with you.
- **Re-read Chapter 7 before your next period, a long trip, or a big event.** It takes five minutes and prepares you for the moments that matter.
- **Be gentle when you talk to others about this.** If a friend or sister ever confides in you about something similar, you now know what to say: *"You are not dirty. There is an explanation, and there is a way through."*

Disclaimer

This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and it is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Every person's body is different, and results vary. The routines and habits described here are intended to support general intimate health and are not a cure for any medical condition. Persistent or recurring odour, discharge, itching, pain, or any of the warning signs listed in this guide may indicate an infection or another condition that needs proper testing and treatment. Please see a qualified healthcare professional if you are concerned, and before making changes to any prescribed treatment. Never stop or change medicine your doctor has given you because of anything in this guide.

The characters and stories in this guide are illustrative composites, and any resemblance to a real person is coincidental. The author and publisher accept no responsibility for any loss, harm, or damage arising from the use of the information in this guide.

© 2026 Adaeze Okonkwo. All rights reserved.