



Bacterial Vaginosis

What is bacterial vaginosis?

Many types of bacteria live in the vagina and keep the vagina healthy. Bacterial vaginosis (BV) happens when there are more unhealthy bacteria in the vagina than healthy bacteria. BV is the most common vaginal infection in women who are 15 to 44 years old.

How do I know if I have BV?

Many women who have BV do not have any symptoms. You may have more vaginal discharge than usual. Your discharge may be gray or white and have a fishy smell. This smell is often worse right after having vaginal sex with a male partner. You also may have burning or itching in your vagina or burning during urination.

How would I get BV?

No one is sure why women get BV. Any woman can get BV, but it usually happens in women who have had sex with another person. Some women have a higher chance of getting BV than others. Women who have new sex partners, more than one sex partner, or female sex partners are more likely to get BV. Women who have genital herpes have a higher chance of getting BV. Douching also makes your chance of getting BV higher.

How can I keep from getting BV?

Because it is not clear how BV is spread, no one knows the best way for women to prevent it. Some things you can do that may keep you from getting BV are:

- Only have sex with one person who agrees to only have sex with you.
- Do not douche. Douching removes healthy bacteria that protect your vagina.
- Use condoms every time you have sex. Women whose male partners use condoms have a lower chance of having BV.
- Do not have sex.

How is BV treated?

BV is treated with antibiotics. You can take pills or use a medicine that you put in your vagina. Take all your medicine even if your symptoms go away. Your sex partners do not need to be treated if you have BV. Avoid having vaginal sex until you finish the medicine. The medicines that go in your vagina can cause latex condoms and diaphragms to get holes in them. That makes it easier for you to get pregnant or get a sexually transmitted infection (STI) if you have sex.

How does BV affect my baby and me if I am pregnant?

Women who have BV have a higher chance of having their babies early, having a baby who weighs less than 5 1/2 pounds at birth, and getting an infection in their uterus. If you have symptoms of BV while you are pregnant, treatment is recommended. The antibiotics are safe for you and your baby during pregnancy.

Does having BV cause other health problems?

Women who have BV have a higher chance of having other health problems such as:

- Getting another STI like gonorrhea or chlamydia if you have sex with someone who has an STI.
- Getting HIV if you have sex with someone who has HIV.
- Passing HIV to your partner if you have HIV and BV.



When should I see a health care provider?

You should call your health care provider if you think you might have a vaginal infection. Your provider will test your vaginal discharge to see if you have BV, a different vaginal infection, or an STI. All of these infections can have similar symptoms, but the treatment for each of them is different.

For More Information**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/bv/stdfact-bacterial-vaginosis.htm>

Healthy Women

<http://www.healthywomen.org/condition/bacterial-vaginosis>

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