

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is one of the most common vaginal infections. It occurs when there is too much of a certain bacteria in the vagina, changing the normal bacterial balance.

How is it spread?

It is unclear how BV is spread. However, you are more likely to get BV if you have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners, douche, or use an IUD (intrauterine device) for birth control.

What are the symptoms of BV?

- A thin white or gray vaginal discharge
- Pain, itching, or burning in the vagina
- A strong fish-like odor, especially after sex
- Burning when urinating
- Itching around the outside of the vagina

How can BV be prevented?

If you choose to have sex, be prepared. Have condoms with a water-based lubricant on hand and use a new condom every time you have sex.

Limit your number of sexual partners. The more people you have sex with, the greater the chance of getting an STD.

Do not douche.

Have regular exams if you are sexually active. Having BV can increase your chances of getting an STD.

How is BV treated?

BV is treated with a course of antibiotics. Antibiotic treatment is especially important for pregnant women, as BV can cause a baby to be born too early. Male partners do not need to be treated.

During treatment, it is very important that you: (1) take all medicines as prescribed even if you start to feel better, (2) inform your health care provider if you think that you may be pregnant before taking any medications, (3) stop all sexual activity until treatment is completed.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.