

# Bacterial Vaginosis

## What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is the most common condition in women of reproductive age. The vagina contains many types of bacteria, BV occurs when there is an excess of the normal bacteria. We do not know why this excess happens, but often there is not enough good bacteria in the vagina.

## How is Bacterial Vaginosis spread?

BV is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI) but women who have sex are more likely to get it.

## What are the symptoms?

### Women

- About half of women with BV do not have symptoms.

### Other women may experience the following:

- Unusual or "fishy" vaginal odour that is often worse after sex
- White or grey vaginal discharge that has a milk-like texture
- Pain when peeing or burning in the vagina during sex is rare.

### Men

- Bacterial Vaginosis is not found in men.

## How is Bacterial Vaginosis diagnosed?

A health care provider takes vaginal swabs which are looked at under a microscope.

## How is Bacterial Vaginosis treated?

BV is treated with a specific medication (antibiotic) that is prescribed by a doctor. If you are treated for BV, make sure all the medication is taken, even if symptoms go away.

You may also find many "non-medical" or "natural" treatments available, but there is not enough evidence to recommend these at this time.

### **Is follow up important?**

Follow-up is not needed, unless the woman is pregnant or the symptoms return. Often BV comes back more than once.

### **Things to think about**

- BV does not cause long-term problems for most women
- BV during pregnancy may increase the risk of pre-term labour and pre-term birth
- If someone has BV at the time of an abortion, vaginal surgery or IUD insertion, the infection can spread and cause other problems.
- Women with BV may be at increased risk of getting HIV if they come in contact with it.

### **How can I reduce my chances of getting Bacterial Vaginosis?**

- Avoid douching and the use of scented soaps
- Wipe from front to back so you do not bring rectal bacteria into the vagina
- Avoid tight jeans
- Choose underwear made of cotton

#### References:

Wong, T. (2006) Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2006 Edition  
Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti-its/>  
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