

## Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

“BV” (bacterial vaginosis) is a condition where there is a change in the number of types of bacteria in the vagina. The reason for these changes is not entirely known. Sexual activity and having a new sex partner can increase your risk for developing BV. There is a medication that can reduce the bacteria that causes B.V.

### ***How do I know if I have BV?***

Women may have any of the following problems:

- Gray, yellow or white “fishy” smelling discharge from the vagina.
- May have itching around the vagina.
- 50% of women with BV don’t have symptoms.

### ***Is BV a serious problem?***

- During pregnancy, bacterial vaginosis can cause early delivery.
- If a woman has BV and needs to have a gynecologic procedure (for example a medical abortion or hysterectomy), it is best to treat the BV before the procedure if possible.
- If a woman is not pregnant and does not have any complaints with BV, it is not necessary to take the medication.

### ***How do I avoid getting BV?***

- Do not douche (rinsing the vagina with water or other liquid)! We think douching increases the BV bacteria in the vagina and washes away the good bacteria that help keep the vagina healthy. Douching also has been linked to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a serious infection in the uterus, tubes and ovaries.
- Make sure to finish all your medications for BV, even if your symptoms improve.
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- If you get BV repeatedly, talk to your clinician about BV prophylaxis.
- Some women get BV over and over, especially after sex. This may be due to their partner’s semen (cum) causing the acidity of their vagina to change. This allows the B.V. bacteria to grow. **Using condoms may help prevent this.**
- Women are able to spread BV to other women during sex if they share sex toys. Washing toys between uses or using condoms on toys may prevent this.

### ***What is the treatment for BV?***

- Medicine called Metronidazole or Clindamycin can be given in pill or vaginal cream form.
- Don’t drink alcohol while taking Metronidazole orally or vaginally. The combination can make people very sick.
- There is current research to see if BV can cause a woman to become more likely to get other STDs. There is also research for new medications that could help normal bacteria return to the vagina.

- Male partners of women with BV do not need to be treated.

**For more information:**

Please talk with your City Clinic clinician or your own health care provider. The following websites also offer helpful information:

**General STD**

[www.ashsexualhealth.org](http://www.ashsexualhealth.org) (also in Espanol)  
[www.cdc.gov/std/](http://www.cdc.gov/std/)  
[www.sfcityclinic.org](http://www.sfcityclinic.org)  
[www.sfsi.org/](http://www.sfsi.org/)

**Contraception and STD/sex info**

[www.bedsider.org](http://www.bedsider.org)

**Teens**

[www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org)  
[www.amplifyyourvoice.org](http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org) (also in Espanol)  
[www.kidshealth.org/teen](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen) (also in Espanol)  
[www.scarleteen.com](http://www.scarleteen.com)

For a STD check-up or treatment,  
see your doctor, local clinic, or come to:



City Clinic  
356 7th Street  
(between Folsom and Harrison)  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 487-5500  
[www.sfcityclinic.org](http://www.sfcityclinic.org)