

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 BV.

How do I know if I have BV?

You may have any of the following problems:

- Gray, yellow or white “fishy” smelling discharge from the vagina.
- Itching around the vagina.
- Many people with BV don’t have symptoms.

Is BV a serious problem?

- During pregnancy, bacterial vaginosis can cause early delivery.
- If a person has BV and needs to have a gynecologic procedure (for example a surgical abortion or hysterectomy), it is best to treat the BV before the procedure if possible.
- If a person is not pregnant and does not have any symptoms of BV, it is not necessary to take the medication.
- BV can cause a person to become more likely to get other STIs.

- 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 often, talk to your clinician about BV prevention.
- Some people get BV over and over, especially after sex. **Using condoms may help prevent this.**
- People are able to spread BV to other partners’ vaginas during sex if they share sex toys. Washing toys between uses or using condoms on toys may prevent this.

- Medicine called metronidazole or clindamycin can be given in pill or vaginal cream form.
- If your partner has a penis, they do not need to be treated for BV.
- There are no probiotic supplements proven to treat or prevent BV.

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For more information:

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

General STI

www.ashasexualhealth.org (also in Español)
www.cdc.gov/std/
www.sfcityclinic.org
www.sfsi.org/

Contraception and STI/sex info

www.bedsider.org

Teens

www.iwannaknow.org
www.kidshealth.org/teen (also in Español)
www.scarleteen.com

For a STI check-up or treatment,
see your health care provider, local clinic, or come to:



A landmark in prevention

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