

# Bacterial Vaginosis

## What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is an infection that results from the overgrowth of certain types of bacteria in the vagina.

- ◆ BV is not a sexually transmitted infection and can occur whether or not you are sexually active.
- ◆ BV is one of the most common vaginal infections in women of reproductive age.
- ◆ Untreated Bacterial Vaginosis can increase the risk of more serious infections such as Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID).

Having BV while pregnant may put a woman at increased risk for some complications of pregnancy.

## What are the symptoms of Bacterial Vaginosis?

Symptoms may include:

- A strong fishy smell, especially after sex
- White or grey discharge
- Watery or foamy discharge
- Redness, itching, or irritation in the genital area

Some cases are so mild that up to 50% of women with BV don't know they have it.

## How can I prevent Bacterial Vaginosis?

Because the cause of BV is unclear, there are no definite ways to prevent it. However, following general guidelines for genital health will lower your risk of infection.

- ◆ Avoid the use of products such as genital hygiene sprays, fragrant or harsh soaps, powders, and scented lotions which can cause irritation. Flavored condoms may cause irritation as well.
- ◆ Avoid douching as it can disrupt the natural balance of the vagina.
- ◆ Wipe front to back to avoid spreading bacteria from the anus to the vagina.
- ◆ Avoid tight pants, underwear without a cotton crotch, and clothing that traps moisture.
- ◆

## How can I find out if I have Bacterial Vaginosis?

- Schedule an exam when you're not having your period
- Don't douche or use vaginal sprays 24 hours before your exam
- If you have sex less than 24 hours before your exam, use condoms

## What can I do to treat Bacterial Vaginosis?

If you have been diagnosed with BV you may be prescribed one of the following antibiotic treatments:

\_\_\_\_\_ Metronidazole 500 mg. Take two pills in the morning and two in the evening for one day. Take the pills with food to prevent nausea. Non-dairy foods are recommended.

\_\_\_\_\_ Metronidazole 500 mg. Take one pill in the morning and one in the evening for seven days. Take the pills with food to prevent nausea. Non-dairy foods are recommended.

\_\_\_\_\_ Metro-Gel Vaginal Insert one applicatorful of Metro-Gel into your vagina two times each day for five days. This prescription will be called in to the pharmacy you request.

**You must not miss any pills!** If you forget to take one, take it as soon as you remember, but **do not take more than one dose at a time.** Even if it seems like the infection has gone away you must take **ALL** of the pills or you will still have the infection. Bacterial vaginosis can recur after treatment.

### **Is there anything I should avoid while taking this medication?**

When taking Metronidazole 500 mg. or using Metro-Gel Vaginal you should **avoid alcohol within 3 days of taking this medication.** The combination of the medication and alcohol can make you seriously ill.

### **Are there side effects from this medication?**

Yes! Some common side effects that you may experience while being treated with Metronidazole are:

- ◆ nausea
- ◆ a metallic taste in your mouth
- ◆

If you experience any of the following more serious side effects with any prescribed medication, be sure to call Family Planning Services, an emergency care clinic, or your family doctor, **but do not stop taking the medication unless instructed to do so.** More serious side effects include:

- ◆ shortness of breath or wheezing
- ◆ difficulty breathing
- ◆ vomiting
- ◆ hives or rash

While you are being treated for Bacterial Vaginosis and for at least one week after finishing the medication, **it is very important to either abstain from sex or use a latex condom every time you have sex. Male partners generally do not need to be treated for this infection. However, BV may be spread between female sex partners.**

For more information visit:

American Social Health Association at <http://www.ashastd.org/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>