PROTECT YOURSELF + PROTECT YOUR PARTNER

# bacterial vaginosis

## THE FACTS

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## THE FACTS

- Bacterial vaginosis (back TEER ee el / va gin NO sus) (BV) is a condition in which there is an overgrowth of some kinds of bacteria in the vagina. BV can cause symptoms such as vaginal discharge.
- BV is common in women of childbearing age.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will **not** prevent BV or any sexually transmitted disease (STD).

PROTECT YOURSELF + PROTECT YOUR PARTNER

## HOW CAN I LOWER MY RISK FOR BV?

Scientists do not fully understand BV and do not know the best ways to prevent it. However, it is known that having a new sex partner or having more than one sex partner increases your risk of getting BV.

To lower your risk of getting BV:

- Do not have sex.
- If you decide to be sexually active, limit the number of partners you have.
- Do not douche.
- Use all the medicine prescribed to treat BV, even if the symptoms go away.

## How do women get BV?

Doctors don't fully understand how people get BV. The disease may spread between women who have sex with women. Any woman can get BV, but you're at higher risk of getting it if:

- You have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners.
- You use an intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control.
- You douche.

Women do not get BV from toilet seats, bedding, or swimming pools or from touching objects around them. Women who have never had sex rarely get BV.

## How can I find out if I have BV?

A doctor must examine you and take a sample of fluid from your vagina to determine if you have BV.

## What are the symptoms of BV?

Some women with BV don't know they have it because they have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you might notice:

- An unusual discharge, with a strong fish-like smell, from your vagina. You are most likely to notice this after you have sex.
- Itching around your vagina.

## When should I be tested?

You should be tested for BV if you have any symptoms (like a vaginal discharge) or if your female sex partner has BV or symptoms that could be BV.

## Can I get BV again after I've been treated?

Yes, you can get BV again.

## What happens if I'm pregnant?

If you're pregnant and have BV:

- You're more likely to give birth prematurely.
- Your baby is more likely to be underweight (less than 5 pounds at birth).

## How is BV treated?

- BV can be treated and cured with antibiotics.
- Finish all of your medicine to be sure you are cured.
- Do not share your medicine with anyone. You need all of it.
- If you still have symptoms after treatment, go back to see your doctor.

## What happens if I don't get treated?

- You may have a higher risk of getting another STD, such as chlamydia or gonorrhea.
- You may have a higher risk of getting HIV infection if you have unprotected sex with an HIV-infected partner.

## If I have BV, what does that mean for my partner?

Male partners do not need to be treated for BV, but BV may spread between women who have sex with women. This means that if you have BV and you have a female sex partner, your partner may have BV too.

## A message for everyone

**PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PARTNER.**

Talk openly and honestly with your partner about STDs.

## For more information

- Talk to your doctor.
- Call 1-800-CDC-INFO.
- Visit www.cdc.gov/std/bv.

CDC Publication No. 99-8825

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