

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

WHAT IS BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a common vaginal infection. Many types of healthy bacteria normally live inside the vagina in small amounts and keep each other in balance. BV occurs when bacteria such as Gardnerella overgrow in the vagina.

SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE

- Vaginal “fish like” odour, which is more noticeable after intercourse
- Thin, grey and milky vaginal discharge
- Itching and /or burning near the vagina

HOW IT SPREADS

The cause of BV is not fully understood. While it is more common in sexually active individuals, it is also found in up to 15 per cent of individuals who have never had sex. BV is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Activities that can upset the normal balance of vaginal bacteria include:

- Having new or multiple sexual partners
- Douching or using hygiene products
- Using an Intrauterine Device (IUD) for contraception

COMPLICATIONS

There are usually no complications. BV is occasionally linked to a condition called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID is an infection of the lining of the uterus, fallopian tubes and /or ovaries.

Having BV can increase:

- The chance of developing PID after procedures such as an abortion
- An individual’s susceptibility to STI’s
- The likelihood that an HIV infected individual can pass HIV to her sex partner
- The risk of complications during pregnancy

DIAGNOSIS

A healthcare provider can often tell if an individual has BV by a physical examination and looking at the vaginal discharge. A sample of the discharge may also be sent to a laboratory for testing.

TREATMENT

You must be treated if you are pregnant, having gynecologic surgery or IUD/IUS insertion, even if you have no symptoms.

BV is usually treated with a prescription medication called Metronidazole. Metronidazole is an antibiotic and has been deemed safe to take while breastfeeding and in all stages of pregnancy. Alcohol can react with

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Metronidazole and cause severe nausea and vomiting. Do not drink alcohol or use medications containing alcohol (e.g., some cough remedies) during treatment and for at least one day after treatment is completed. Sexual partners are usually not treated.

PROTECTION

The following actions may help reduce your risk for developing BV:

- Limit your number of sexual partners
- Do not douche
- Do not smoke
- Complete all medications prescribed for treating BV even if your symptoms go away before you have finished your treatment

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Bacterial Vaginosis sexandu.ca
- York Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics **1-800-361-5653, # 1**