

GET YOURSELF TESTED

Testing is confidential. If you are under 18 years old, you can be checked and treated for STIs without parental consent.

Bacterial Vaginosis

When can I have sex again?

If you have been treated for BV you should not have sex for seven days after your treatment is over.

What about my partner(s)?

Although it is not known whether BV is spread through sex, your partner(s) should be checked for BV and other sexually transmitted infections. This is even more important if your BV keeps coming back.

How can I prevent bacterial vaginosis?

- **Use a latex or polyurethane condom** every time you have sex. This may lower your chances of having this infection again.
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- **Do not douche** or forcefully clean your vagina with soap or other feminine hygiene products. These products might upset your vagina's normal balance of good and bad bacteria.

What happens if I don't get treated?

- You may be more likely to get HIV, if you have sex with someone who is living with HIV and they have a detectable viral load.

- If you have HIV and have a detectable viral load, having BV can increase your chance of passing HIV to your sex partner.
- If you are pregnant or become pregnant you are at risk of having a premature (early) or low birth weight baby.
- Your risk of getting STIs, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, increases.
- BV can increase your chance of getting pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID is an infection of the female reproductive organs, which can make it hard to get pregnant or carry a baby full-term.

To learn more

If you have more questions about bacterial vaginosis, or to find a clinic near you, call your local health department or family planning program.

You can also find a testing center near you at <https://gettested.cdc.gov> or 1-800-541-2437.



Department of Health

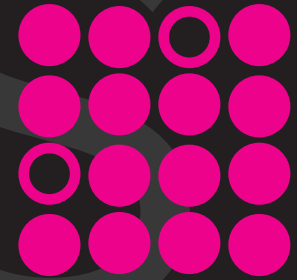
BV is the most common vaginal infection that affects about one in three women.



BV can be cured with antibiotics.



Most women with BV don't know they have it.



What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a common vaginal infection. It affects about one of every three women of childbearing age.

What causes BV?

A normal, healthy vagina has mostly healthy or “good” bacteria and very few unhealthy or “bad” bacteria. BV happens when the pH balance or level of acidity in your vagina is upset. This change allows the bad bacteria to grow more than normal and take over. At the same time, the good bacteria are destroyed.

Women who are sexually active are much more likely to get BV. It is not known if BV is spread through sex, but having vaginal sex with a new partner or with more than one partner can upset the balance of bacteria in the vagina which can cause BV. Douching, or frequently cleaning your vagina with soap or other products may rinse away or destroy good bacteria and let bad bacteria take over.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most women with BV don't know they have it. If symptoms are present, they are usually mild.

Symptoms may include:

- a thin, gray or white discharge that sticks to the walls of the vagina;
- an unpleasant, fishy or musty odor;
- burning when urinating;
- occasional vaginal itching; and
- vaginal irritation during or after sex.

How will I know if I have BV?

To know for sure, you should visit a health care provider, who will do a pelvic exam and discuss any symptoms you may have. Your provider will collect a sample of your vaginal fluid to check the levels of good and bad bacteria and/or check the pH level of your vagina.

Is there a cure?

Yes. BV can be cured with antibiotics. Your health care provider will choose the medicine that is right for you. It is important to take all of your medicine even if the signs and symptoms go away. Most of the time, treatment lowers the number of bad bacteria in your vagina. It will not totally get rid of them, because a normal healthy vagina has a small amount of bad, along with a large number of good, bacteria. In some women, the bad bacteria can multiply (grow) and cause BV to come back. If this happens you will need to visit your health care provider again for more treatment.

What if I am pregnant?

If you have symptoms and you are pregnant, or think you might be, it is even more important to get tested by your health care provider, and treated if you have BV. BV can cause problems during pregnancy. People who have had a premature (early) delivery or low birth weight baby should consider a BV exam, even if there are no symptoms. You should discuss this with your health care provider to learn more.