

## Bacterial Vaginosis

**What is bacterial vaginosis (BV)?** BV is an infection in the vagina that can cause discharge that smells bad. It also causes a lot *more* discharge. It is normal for women to have a small amount of discharge each day.

BV is caused by a specific type of bacteria. The vagina normally has good types of bacteria in it. When the amount or types of bacteria change, it can cause an infection. Women do not get BV from having sex with men. But women who have BV have a higher chance of getting other infections from their partner during sex. Women who have sex with other women can pass BV on to their partner.

**What are symptoms of BV?** Many women do not have symptoms. When women do have symptoms, they include:

- A "fishy-smelling" vaginal discharge. This may be worse after sex.
- Watery discharge that is off-white or gray in color.
- Burning feeling in the vagina.

**Can you test for BV?** Yes. You should see your provider, who will complete an exam. They will also take a sample of your discharge and do lab tests on the sample to look for an infection.

**How is BV treated?** BV is treated with an antibiotic prescribed by your medical provider. You and your provider will decide which medicine and which form is right for you. It is important to take all the medicine you are prescribed even if your symptoms go away quickly. Taking all your medicine can help prevent the symptoms from returning.

**Does my sex partner need to be treated?** If your partner is male, he does not need to be treated. If you have sex with another women, you should tell any partners about your infection. They will want to be tested if they also have symptoms.

**What can I do to help prevent BV?** Sometimes you can prevent BV by:

- Avoiding use of scented body soaps, scented laundry detergents and scented drier sheets.
- Not wearing tight and restrictive clothing like yoga pants.
- Avoiding douching.
- Use condoms when having sex.
- Not smoking.
- Thoroughly washing any used sex toys with mild soap and warm water.

If you are pregnant and have symptoms, or if your symptoms return after previous treatment for BV, tell your provider.