



Bacterial Vaginosis

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a mild bacterial infection of the vagina and it is the most common type of vaginal infection.

The vagina has two types of bacteria: good and bad. BV occurs when the balance between the two is disturbed and too many bad bacteria grow.

The risk of getting BV is higher if you:

- Have more than one sexual partner (a sexual partner is anyone you touch-or are touched by-in the genital area, or with whom you have genital-to-genital contact- not necessarily “sex.”)
 - Have a partner with a vagina
 - Have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
 - Use an IUD for birth control
- Douche (cleaning or rinsing the vagina with water or other fluids, which is not recommended by modern medicine.)

BV is not classified as a sexually transmitted infection (STI) because it is an infection that develops naturally in an individual’s vagina.

An individual does **not** have to be sexually active to develop BV. **However, an individual with a vagina can pass BV to their sexual partner(s).**

BV is not the same as a yeast infection, but these infections share many symptoms and causes. Be sure that you see your doctor to confirm that you have BV rather than another infection, since they require specific medications or treatments.

What Are the Signs of Bacterial Vaginosis?

Sometimes there are no symptoms!

However, symptoms may include:

- Fishy odor from the vagina, particularly after sex
- Change in vaginal discharge (may be grayish-white or yellow colour)
 - Burning sensation while urinating
- Itching around the outside of the vagina and on the vulva

If you have any unusual symptoms in the genital area, please see a doctor immediately.

How Will a Doctor Know That I Have Bacterial Vaginosis?

- Your doctor may be able to diagnose BV by examining your discharge.
- Normally the doctor will send a swab of the discharge to the lab for testing.

Remember some STIs have symptoms like BV. Schedule an appointment to see your doctor to diagnose and treat your symptoms.

How is Bacterial Vaginosis Treated?

- BV may clear up on its own without treatment.
- BV can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by a health care professional.

How Long Will It Take for the Symptoms to Disappear?

- Once you begin treatment, you should see improvement in 2 – 3 days.
 - **Complete your medication**, even if you are feeling better.

What Are Possible Complications from Bacterial Vaginosis?

- Increased risk of contracting HIV and other STIs, if exposed to them.
- Increased risk that an individual with a vagina with HIV can pass HIV to their sex partner.
 - Increased risk of developing Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID).
 - Increased risk of complications during pregnancy.

How Could Bacterial Vaginosis Affect Pregnancy?

BV increases the chances of:

- Miscarriage
- Premature delivery
- Developing uterine infections after birth

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) is a potentially life-threatening complication of BV.

- PID is an infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes.
- PID can lead to infertility or damage to the fallopian tubes.
- PID can increase risk of an ectopic pregnancy (where fertilized eggs implant and develop outside of the uterus).

Pregnant individuals with BV must be treated!

How Will I know if I passed Bacterial Vaginosis to a Partner with a Penis?

Individuals with penises are not tested or treated for BV. However, it is possible for a partner with a penis to pass BV back to a female partner. Therefore, if BV is present, it is a good idea to abstain from sex or to use condoms until treatment is complete.

Can an Individual with a Vagina Pass Bacterial Vaginosis to Another Individual with a Vagina?

- Yes. BV can be passed between individuals with vaginas through sexual contact.
- To prevent passing on BV, try to abstain from sex until the infection is cleared.
 - If this is not possible, condoms should be used on any sex toys, and
- Individuals with vaginas should avoid tribadism/scissoring (sex by rubbing vulvas together) until the infection is gone.

If you would like further information on BV, STIs, testing and/or safer sex practices, please feel free to drop by our Centre or contact us by phone or email.

Planned Parenthood Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare's Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm
Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm
Wednesday: 9am - 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm
Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

Phone:

709-579-1009

Toll Free 1-877-NO MYTHS (1-877-666-9847)

Website:

www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com/

Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

Revised July 2020