

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a vaginal infection caused by an abnormal overgrowth of the natural bacteria found in the vagina. This overgrowth is most likely caused by an imbalance in the normal flora of the vagina. BV is not a sexually transmitted disease.

What are the symptoms of BV?

The most common symptom of BV is a foul or “fishy” vaginal odor. Many women experience a thin, grey or white vaginal discharge or vaginal irritation when infected with BV. BV is not usually associated with vaginal itching.

How do I treat BV?

BV should be treated with prescription antibiotics taken orally (pills) or by vaginal suppository (gels or creams). You and your healthcare provider will determine the best treatment for you. Over-the-counter treatments, such as douches and feminine hygiene sprays, do not treat BV, and can make the infection worse.

How do I prevent BV?

- Avoid douching. Douching upsets the natural balance of the vagina and can allow an overgrowth of bacteria in the vagina. The vagina “cleans” itself naturally without douching.
- Avoid using perfume, feminine hygiene sprays, and perfumed soaps in the vaginal area. These products can irritate and dry the sensitive tissue of the vaginal area and cause an overgrowth of bacteria.
- Avoid wearing tight, hot, wet clothing that can trap moisture and allow bacterial growth.