

How do I know if I have bacterial vaginosis?

Many women with BV do not have symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you may notice a thin white or gray vaginal discharge, odor, pain, itching, or burning in the vagina. Some women have a strong fish-like odor, especially after sex. You may also have burning when urinating; itching around the outside of the vagina, or both.

How will my doctor know if I have bacterial vaginosis?

A health care provider will look at your vagina for signs of BV and perform laboratory tests on a sample of vaginal fluid to determine if BV is present.

Can bacterial vaginosis be cured?

BV will sometimes go away without treatment. But if you have symptoms of BV you should be checked and treated. It is important that you take all of the medicine prescribed to you, even if your symptoms go away. A health care provider can treat BV with antibiotics, but BV can recur even after treatment. Treatment may also reduce the risk for STDs.

Male sex partners of women diagnosed with BV generally do not need to be treated. However, BV may be transferred between female sex partners.

What happens if I don't get treated?

BV can cause some serious health risks, including

- Increasing your chance of getting HIV if you have sex with someone who is infected with HIV;
- If you are HIV positive, increasing your chance of passing HIV to your sex partner;
- Making it more likely that you will deliver your baby too early if you have BV while pregnant;
- Increasing your chance of getting other STDs, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. These bacteria can sometimes cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can make it difficult or impossible for you to have children.

Where can I get more information?

Division of STD Prevention
(DSTDP)
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
www.cdc.gov/std

CDC-INFO Contact Center
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
Contact www.cdc.gov/info

CDC National Prevention
Information Network (NPIN)
[http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/
index.asp](http://www.cdcnpin.org/scripts/index.asp)
P.O. Box 6003
Rockville, MD 20849-6003
E-mail: info@cdcnpin.org

American Sexual Health
Association (ASHA)
<http://www.ashastd.org/>
P.O. Box 13827
Research Triangle Park,
NC 27709-3827
1-800-783-9877