

# Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) Fact Sheet

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## What is BV?

BV is the most common type of vaginal infection that can happen due to an imbalance of “good” and “harmful” bacteria that are normally found in a woman’s vagina. It is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI), but it can increase your risk for getting STIs and sexually active women are most likely to get BV. BV is the most common vaginal infection in women ages 15-44. Men do not get BV. However, BV can be transferred between female sex partners.

The Lenawee County Health Department can test for BV at the same time as doing a pap smear. Other healthcare providers may be able to test for BV without doing a pap smear.

## Why does BV Occur in Some Women?

BV occurs when the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina is disrupted. This is most likely when there are new or multiple sex partners involved. Douching, perfumed bubble baths, vaginal deodorants, some scented soaps, smoking, strong detergents, bathing in antiseptic liquids, and scented wet wipes can also throw off the natural flora of the vagina and cause BV infections.

## Symptoms of BV

Many women with BV do not have symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you may notice:

- A thin white or gray vaginal discharge
- A strong fish-like odor, especially after sex
- Pain, itching, or burning in the vagina
- Burning with urination
- Itching around the outside of the vagina

## Treating BV

- Visit your local health care provider
- It is important to take all the medication properly as prescribed even if symptoms go away sooner (this can be oral antibiotics or vaginal medications for about a week)
- Generally male partners do not need treatment, but female partners can get BV from their female partners
- Do not share medication
- Follow-up with your healthcare provider, especially if symptoms persist
- Not treating BV can increase your risk of getting STIs or HIV, and occasionally lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can make it difficult or impossible to have children
- There is the possibility of having BV more than once. See your local health care provider if your symptoms come back.

## Pregnancy and BV

Pregnant women with BV are more likely to have babies who are born prematurely (at less than 37 weeks) or with low birth weight than women who do not have BV while pregnant. Low birth weight means having a baby that weighs less than 5.5 pounds at birth. It is important pregnant women are treated.

## To Reduce Your Risk of BV

- Abstain from sex
- If you do have sex, use a new condom with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex
- Limit the number of sexual partners
- Have regular exams if you are sexually active
- Do not douche
- Remember: A Pap smear is not a test for STIs

More Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/bv/stdfact-bacterial-vaginosis.htm>



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