

Can I Still Have Sex?

If you are sexually active, be sure whenever you do have sex always to use a latex or polyurethane condom while being treated.

Is Bacterial Vaginosis Dangerous?

Bacterial vaginosis is usually not dangerous. Sometimes it can cause other health problems such as increasing a woman's change of getting HIV, herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia or other sexually transmitted infections.

Pregnancy Problems

If you are pregnant and have symptoms of vaginosis, let your health care provider know.

How Can I Protect Myself?

- ◆ Limit the number of people you have sex with. The more people you have sex with during your life, the more likely it is that you will get vaginosis.
- ◆ If not seeking pregnancy, use a latex or polyurethane condom whenever you have sex.
- ◆ Do not douche.
- ◆ Eat one cup of yogurt containing active cultures daily.
- ◆ Avoid using feminine hygiene deodorant and sprays and scented toilet paper or sanitary products.

If you have any problems or questions, call your health department or health care provider.



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Bacterial Vaginosis



What Is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (pronounced BAK TEER e ul VAJ uh NO sis) is a very common infection of the vagina. It is sometimes called BV. It was once known as hemophilus, gardnerella and non-specific vaginitis.

How Do I Get Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is caused by several kinds of bacteria (germs). Some of these bacteria can be passed on during sexual intercourse. However, many of the bacteria that cause vaginosis live in the vagina all the time. Your body usually keeps these bacteria in check. Sometimes they grow faster than your body can control them. Then they cause the symptoms of vaginosis.

What Are the Symptoms?

- ◆ Thin, sticky, white or grayish discharge.
- ◆ A bad odor from the vagina—sometimes smells fishy.
- ◆ Burning or itching in or around the vagina.

Many women have no symptoms but are still infected.

If You Have These Symptoms

If you have any of these symptoms, see your health care provider.

There may be a need to look at your genital area and take a sample of the discharge from your vagina. This will help your health care provider find

out which bacteria are causing your infection.

How Is Bacterial Vaginosis Treated?

Sometimes you will not need any treatment. In one out of three women who are not pregnant, the symptoms will go away on their own. In women who are pregnant, half will go away without treatment. If treatment is needed, bacterial vaginosis can be treated with several medicines. These include:

- ◆ Metronidazole (tablets or vaginal gel);
- ◆ Clindamycin (tablets or vaginal cream).

Since more than one kind of bacteria can cause vaginosis, your doctor may give you more than one medicine to take. Tell your health care provider if you are pregnant.

What About My Medicine?

Take all the medicine. You may begin to feel better after several days, but you need to take all your medicine to cure the infection.

Be sure you are the only one who uses your medicine.

If your medicine is metronidazole (pills or vaginal gel), there are some things you should know:

- ◆ Do not drink any beer, wine, liquor, wine coolers or alcohol of any type while you take the medicine and for one day after

you finish. Drinking alcohol and taking these medicines can cause severe nausea, racing heartbeat and hot flashes. (Some cough syrups and non-prescription medicines have alcohol in them. Check with your health care provider before using any other medicine.)

- ◆ You may have some **stomach upset**. Taking the medicine with food can help.
- ◆ You may have a bad, metal-like taste in your mouth. This will go away after you finish the medicine.
- ◆ Your urine may be darker.
- ◆ You may get a yeast (candida) infection. Your health care provider can give you another medicine if you have problems with yeast.
- ◆ If you have vomiting, severe dizziness, rash, seizures or numbness in your hands or feet, stop the medicine and contact your health care provider.

What If My Infection Comes Back?

Vaginosis can be hard to treat. It can take a long time for symptoms to disappear. Sometimes they will come back and need to be treated again.

You might be confused, angry or sad because vaginosis is so hard to treat. Keep taking your medicine. Talk to your health care provider. She or he will help you until your infection is under control.