

# Bacterial Vaginosis Fact Sheet

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## SOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ [Bacterial Vaginosis Fact Sheet](#)
- ❖ [2010 STD Treatment Guidelines](#)

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

- ❖ [Bacterial Vaginosis Information](#)

### What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a condition that occurs when there is an overgrowth of certain types of bacteria in the vagina. This imbalance leads to fewer of the “good” types of bacteria that keep the vagina healthy.



### What are the symptoms?

Most women with BV don't have symptoms. For those who do, symptoms might include:

- ❖ Odor (often described as strong and “fishy”) or whitish/gray discharge from the vagina
- ❖ Itching around the outside of the vagina
- ❖ Burning during urination



### Testing/Diagnosis

A diagnosis of BV may be made based on:

- ❖ Detection of bacteria associated with BV through a vaginal fluid sample (Gram stain).
- ❖ Elevated pH in vaginal fluid
- ❖ Presence of certain “clue cells” in vaginal discharge seen under a microscope

### How common is bacterial vaginosis?

It is estimated that BV is the most common bacterial infection among women of childbearing age in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).





## What is the treatment for bacterial vaginosis?

While the infection sometimes clears on its own, many women diagnosed with BV should be treated. BV can be treated with antibiotics in an oral, cream or gel form).

Treatment of male partners has not been shown to prevent recurrences, so treatment for men is not typically recommended.



## What are the complications of bacterial vaginosis?

BV can increase a woman's risk of getting other STDs if she's exposed to STDs such as herpes, HIV, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. BV can cause babies to be born early or with low birth weight.

The bacteria that cause BV sometimes spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). If untreated, PID can cause chronic pelvic pain and tubal pregnancies. PID can even damage the reproductive organs and make it hard to become pregnant.

### How do people get bacterial vaginosis?

It isn't fully understood how women develop bacterial vaginosis, and the role of sexual activity in causing BV isn't clear.

BV is associated with douching, having multiple or new sexual partners, and not using condoms. However, any woman can develop BV, including those who have never had sex.

BV isn't caused by towels, toilet seats, bed linens, or swimming pools.



## Reduce your risk

- ❖ Limit the number of sex partners.
- ❖ Do not douche.
- ❖ During treatment, women are advised to avoid intercourse or to use condoms if they have sex.

