



## Bacterial Vaginosis Facts

### What is bacterial vaginosis (BV)?

Bacterial vaginosis is the name of a condition in women where the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina is disrupted. BV is the most common vaginal infection in women of childbearing age. In the United States, BV is common in pregnant women.

### How do you get bacterial vaginosis?

Little is known about how you get BV. However, BV is associated with an increased production of harmful bacteria in the vagina. Some activities or behaviors can upset the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina and put women at an increased risk, including:

- Having a new sex partner or multiple sex partners
- Douching

You **cannot** get BV from:

- Toilet seats
- Bedding
- Swimming pools

### Can you reduce the chance of getting bacterial vaginosis?

Yes. The best ways to avoid BV are to:

- Not have sex (abstinence).
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- **Not** douche.
- Use all the medication prescribed to treat BV, even if the symptoms go away before you finish your medication.

### What are the symptoms of bacterial vaginosis?

Most women with BV report no signs or symptoms. When symptoms are present, they may include:

- White or gray discharge from the vagina.
- Odor from the vagina, especially after having sex.
- Burning or itching in or around the vagina.

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider or the Guilford County Public Health Division. Since the symptoms of STIs often resemble one another, diagnosis by a health care provider is the only way to know for sure if you are infected. A health care provider will examine the vagina for signs of BV and perform lab tests on a sample of vaginal fluid to look for bacteria associated with BV.

### Is bacterial vaginosis dangerous?

In most cases, BV causes no complications. However, there are some serious risks from BV, including:

- an increase in the development of an infection following surgical procedures such as a hysterectomy or an abortion.
- an increased risk for some complications of pregnancy, such as preterm delivery.
- an increased risk of being infected with HIV and other STIs if some women are exposed to them.

- an increased risk an HIV-infected woman can pass HIV to her sex partner.

**Is there a cure for bacterial vaginosis?**

Yes, BV may be cured with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider. Although BV will sometimes clear up without treatment, all women with symptoms of BV should be treated to avoid complications. Male partners generally do not need to be treated. However, BV may spread between female sex partners. Treatment is especially important for pregnant women.

**Can you still have sex?**

You should not have sex until you have finished all the prescribed medicine.

**Who can I call for more information?**

American Social Health Association Hotline: 1-800-227-8922

[www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)

Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division

Greensboro or High Point: 336-641-7777

[www.myguilford.com](http://www.myguilford.com)