

Genitourinary Medicine

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

Information for patients



Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a very common vaginal infection. It occurs when bacteria in the vagina that normally exist in small numbers overgrow. The infection does not get passed on to male sexual partners.

Signs and symptoms

Not every woman with BV has symptoms but the most common is a change in vaginal discharge. This may increase, become thin and watery, change to a white/grey colour and develop a fishy smell, especially after sex.

How BV develops

BV occurs when the acidity of the vagina changes. The most common causes are:

- Using perfumed soap or bubble bath when you wash
- Douching (washing out your vagina) or using vaginal deodorants too often
- Having sex without a condom, where semen enters the vagina
- Using strong detergents to wash your underwear
- Using an IUD (intra-uterine contraceptive device – a “coil”)

The tests for Bacterial Vaginosis

- A doctor or nurse will carry out an examination of your vaginal area
- Samples are taken from inside the vagina using a cotton wool swab
- An internal pelvic examination may be carried out
- A sample of urine may be taken

None of these tests should be painful, but may sometimes be uncomfortable.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of BV is made by looking at a specimen of your vaginal discharge under a microscope, and from the examination by the doctor or nurse.

Treatment

Treatment is easy. You will be prescribed antibiotic tablets or cream to put inside the vagina.

If you are allergic to any antibiotics, or if there is any possibility that you may be pregnant, it is important that you tell your Doctor. BV can cause a miscarriage or other problems during pregnancy. Different treatment may need to be prescribed.

It is always important that you finish the course of treatment, even if your symptoms disappear before you have taken the last tablet or finished the cream.

Follow-up

It is not necessary to return to the clinic if you have finished your treatment and your symptoms have gone. But do make sure you get the results of any tests that were done. If you are still having problems then you should return to the clinic.

It is possible to have more than one sexually transmitted infection at the same time. That is why it is important to have a full examination and tests. NHS Sexual Health (GUM) Clinics routinely test for a number of sexually transmitted infections.

Remember, after treatment, using condoms during sex can reduce your risk of getting or passing on sexually transmitted infections.

How to contact us

If you have questions or to make an appointment, please telephone:

Oxford: 01865 231231

Banbury: 01295 819181

Further information

<http://www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Bacterial-Vaginosis.htm>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bacterialvaginosis/pages/diagnosingbv.aspx>

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Oxford GU Medicine
Version 1, July 2010
Review, July 2013
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