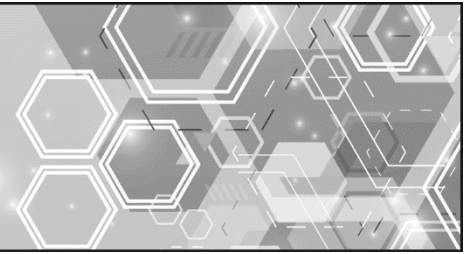




## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# **Bacterial Vaginosis**

## **What is it?**

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is an infection that occurs when there is an imbalance of certain bacteria in the vagina. BV is the most common cause of abnormal vaginal discharge in women who are sexually active and can cause pregnant individuals to deliver their baby early. BV may increase the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and a pelvic infection following procedures such as intrauterine device (IUD) insertion, surgical abortion, or other surgical procedures involving the female reproductive organs.

## **How is it spread?**

BV is not considered an STI and does not spread to male sexual partners. Having a new sex partner, multiple sex partners, sex with another female, as well as douching (rinsing the vagina with a liquid), can upset the balance of bacteria in the vagina. This places women and people with vaginas at increased risk for BV.

## **What do I look for?**

Many people with BV have no symptoms. When there are symptoms, these often include a "fishy-smelling" vaginal discharge that might be noticed more after sex. The discharge is watery and off-white or gray. A burning feeling in the vagina may also be noticed. If you have symptoms, your health care provider can send a sample of the vaginal fluid to the lab to be tested for BV.

## **How is it treated?**

BV can clear on its own without any treatment. An antibiotic may be prescribed, or over the counter medication recommended. It is important to finish all the medication as directed, even if you are feeling better. It is important to tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding before taking any treatment.

After having BV, it is common for it to return within one year. Repeat testing and treatment may be needed.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](http://durham.ca/health)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



# How can I protect myself?

- Do not douche. Douching upsets the balance of good and harmful bacteria in your vagina.
- Avoid using deodorants or perfumed products in and around your vaginal area.
- Wash your anus and vagina every day to keep harmful bacteria away, using a mild unscented soap.
- Wipe from front to back after going to the toilet.
- Use a mild laundry detergent to wash your underwear.
- Change your tampons or pads frequently.
- Limit the number of sex partners or abstain from sex.
- Practice safe sex and always use a condom with lubricant when having oral, vaginal, or anal sex.
- Avoid smoking.
- Get tested for STIs.

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