



Bacterial Vaginosis

Bacterial vaginosis is the most common cause of vaginitis in the United States. Various terms have existed throughout time to describe bacterial vaginosis (BV). Bacterial vaginosis occurs from a change in bacterial amounts from the normal vaginal environment. It is not considered a sexually transmitted disease.

Symptoms and signs of bacterial vaginosis

You may notice a “fishy” smell from your vagina, often following sex and during your menstrual period. There is an increased or different vaginal discharge (thin, white to gray color). Vulvar itching may be present. The underpants are stained at times. Some women who have bacterial vaginosis do not have any symptoms.

Diagnosis of bacterial vaginosis

Bacterial vaginosis is generally diagnosed by your health care provider during an office visit. A speculum is inserted into the vagina and the vaginal discharge is examined under the microscope.

Treatments for bacterial vaginosis

BV can be treated in several ways. Medications are given either by mouth or into the vagina.

Follow-Up

Follow-up visits are unnecessary if symptoms resolve.

Recurrent bacterial vaginosis

Up to 30% of patients find that the BV is back again within 3 months. A longer treatment period of 10-14 days may then be needed. The medication you were on is often switched. Currently some health care providers are using twice weekly medication into the vagina for up to three months for recurrent BV. There is debate about treatment of partners. Most clinicians do not recommend that partners be treated.

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