

Patient Information:

- ◆ **What is BV?**
- ◆ **Treatment**

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is the most common kind of vaginal infection. BV is caused by an overgrowth of normal bacteria in the vagina. BV is not sexually transmitted. Women do not catch it from someone else. While it is more common in women who are sexually active, it also occurs in women who have never been sexually active or who are not currently sexually active. The exact cause is unknown but good vaginal hygiene can help prevent it.

Things that can cause an overgrowth of bacteria include:

- ◆ some medicines
- ◆ Pregnancy
- ◆ Douching
- ◆ damp underwear
- ◆ tight pants
- ◆ vaginal products such as perfumed soaps, feminine sprays and lubricants
- ◆ Women who do have a sexually transmitted infection (STI) often have BV in conjunction with the STI.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS IS NOT A YEAST INFECTION

Many women have never heard of BV. They often assume that most vaginal infections are yeast infections and use medicine for that. Medicines for yeast infections will not cure BV. Yeast infections are caused by an overgrowth of fungus which is also normally in the vagina. Both yeast infections and BV can cause a discharge but the discharges are different. BV's discharge is usually thin/watery, milky white or gray and might have a fishy or unpleasant odor. Sometimes there will be vaginal irritation and/or itching. Sometimes a woman will have no symptoms at all. Yeast infections usually have thick, white, cottage cheese-like discharges and almost always are accompanied by vaginal itching and irritation.

TREATMENT FOR BV

BV should be treated. If left untreated BV may migrate into the uterus or the fallopian tubes and cause more serious infections. BV may be treated one of two ways. Your healthcare provider may prescribe pills to take by mouth, or a cream/gel to insert into the vagina. If prescribed the oral medication, metronidazole (brand name: Flagyl), do not consume any alcohol while taking the medicine for 24 hours before beginning treatment and 24 hours after ending treatment. Alcohol plus this medicine causes extreme nausea and vomiting. Even the small amount of alcohol in many liquid medications may cause nausea and vomiting if taking metronidazole.