

## Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

### What is bacterial vaginosis (BV)

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a common mild imbalance of bacteria or germs in the vagina.

The vagina normally contains a lot of good bacteria, as well as some other types of bacteria. Too many of the other types can cause BV.

To find out if you have BV, you must be examined by doctor or nurse and have tests taken of your vaginal fluid.

### What are the symptoms?

If you have bacterial vaginosis, you may not have any symptoms. You may notice a change in the fluid from your vagina, including a change in the colour or odour of the fluid. This fluid may change to shades of grey. It may also have a fish-like odour.

While BV is more common in women who are sexually active, it can occur in women who are not sexually active. It is not usually spread between sexual partners.

### What is the treatment?

Women who have BV that is *not* causing symptoms usually are not treated. The condition tends to go away without medication.

When there are symptoms, your doctor may prescribe treatment so the infection does not spread into the fallopian tubes and cause more serious infections.

BV is treated with specific antibiotic medications. Your doctor may prescribe them as either a medication cream that is inserted into the vagina, or as pills taken by mouth. Only medications taken by mouth are used to treat pregnant women.

It is not necessary for your sexual partner(s) to be treated.

### Should I be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

If you have different sexual partners, or if your partner has different partners, you should also be tested for other STDs including gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and HIV (the virus linked to AIDS). You should also consider getting vaccine shots to prevent hepatitis B infection.

**Please remember:** The more sexual partners you have, the higher your risk of getting a STD.

### Birth control pills

Birth control pills may not work very well when you are taking some antibiotic medicines. Keep taking your birth control pills while taking any medication, and also use a second form of birth control, such as a condom, until your next period after completing the antibiotics.

## Ways to reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease

- Have sex with only one partner who has been tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), who has been treated if necessary and who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.
- Use a female or male condom every time you have sex. Condoms offer protection against STDs, but they must be used properly.
- Have regular check-ups for STDs.
- Decide not to have sex.

## Important facts about condoms

- A condom acts like a barrier that helps prevent the exchange of body fluids, the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy.
- A new condom should be used each time you have sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal, or oral sex).
- Check the expiry date on the condom package.
- Use only water-based lubricants with the male latex condom. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, lotion or baby oil, can weaken and destroy latex.
- Female condoms are made of polyurethane. This material can be used with any type of lubricant, water-based or oil-based.
- Some lubricants contain chemicals called spermicides to help protect against unwanted pregnancy. If they irritate your genitals, don't use them.
- Do not use a male condom together with a female condom as the friction created may cause tearing of either product.
- If a condom breaks during sex remove it immediately and apply a new condom.
- Remember! Condoms do not offer 100 per cent protection from STDs and unwanted pregnancy. It will not consistently prevent transmission of STDs passed through skin-to-skin contact – for example, syphilis, human papilloma virus (warts) and herpes. However, if used properly, they are very effective and can reduce the risk of transmission of these STDs.

## Putting on a male condom

- Take the condom carefully out of the packet.
- Place the condom on the tip of the penis when it is hard and erect, but before it touches the partner's body. Make sure that the rolled-up condom rim faces outward.
- With the other hand, pinch the tip of the condom to remove any trapped air, and unroll the condom to the base of the erect penis.

- After intercourse and before the penis becomes soft, withdraw the penis carefully, holding the rim of the condom against the penis, so that semen does not spill out.
- Slide the condom gently off the penis, and knot the open end.
- After using the condom, throw it in the garbage.

## Putting on a female condom

- A condom can be inserted up to eight hours before sexual intercourse.
- Open the package carefully. Hold the small ring at the closed end of the condom between the thumb and middle finger.
- Find a comfortable position, either lying down, sitting with your knees apart or standing with one foot raised on a stool, squeeze the small ring and insert it into the vagina as far as you can.
- Put a finger inside the condom and push the small ring inside as far as possible. It is also possible to insert the condom by putting it onto the erect penis before intercourse.
- Make sure that the part of the condom with the outer ring is outside the body. The outer ring will lie flat against the body when the penis is inside the condom.
- When the penis enters the vagina, make sure that the penis is inside the condom.
- Immediately after sexual intercourse, remove the condom by gently twisting the outer ring and pulling the condom out, making sure that no semen is spilt and throw it in the garbage.



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