



---

## BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS (BV)

---

### WHAT IS BV?

The healthy vagina contains many different types of bacteria. In BV, there is a change in the balance of these bacteria, with some increasing and others decreasing. This may result in an unpleasant odour and/or discharge. The actual cause of BV remains unclear and is the subject of current research studies.

### HOW DO YOU GET BV?

Women who are sexually active appear more likely to get BV. However we don't know if BV is actually transmitted through sex, or whether it is sexual activity itself that causes BV.

Studies have shown that certain practices are associated with an increased risk of developing BV. These include; a change in sexual partner, not using condoms consistently, having a female partner, and douching (which is the practice of washing inside the vagina with soap or another product).

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Up to 50% of women will notice an unpleasant or fishy vaginal odour and / or a vaginal discharge. The remainder of women with BV, experience no symptoms.

### HOW DO YOU TEST FOR BV?

The diagnosis of BV is made by a combination of examination and microbiological findings.

### HOW IS BV TREATED?

BV is usually treated with an antibiotic called metronidazole (flagyl) or a vaginal antibiotic cream called clindamycin (Dalacin V) for 7 days. While these treatments are effective in the short term, up to 50% of women may experience a recurrence of BV within a year of treatment. . Some women with problematic recurring BV may benefit from a longer treatment of vaginal antibiotics.

### ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS IF BV IS NOT TREATED?

BV is a common condition and many women with BV do not suffer from any complications. However, BV has been associated with early pregnancy loss, premature delivery and low birth weight of infants, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and an increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection.

### WILL IT RECUR?

Nearly half the women who are treated for BV experience recurrence. If you develop symptoms after treatment please see a doctor.

### HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING BV?

Currently we cannot tell women what to do to avoid getting BV. We advise all women to use condoms as a general principle. However, while condoms may help in avoiding BV, they are not completely protective.

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Bacterial Vaginosis. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.