

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M PREGNANT?

If you're pregnant and have BV:

- You're more likely to give birth prematurely.
- Your baby is more likely to be underweight (less than 5 pounds at birth).

## IF I HAVE BV, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR MY PARTNERS?

People with penises do not need to be treated for BV, but BV may spread between people with vaginas. This means that if you have BV and your sex partner has a vagina, they may have BV too.

a message for everyone  
PROTECT YOURSELF + YOUR PARTNERS

Talk openly and honestly with your partner(s) about STIs.



For more information, contact:

**MULTNOMAH COUNTY STI CLINIC**

Phone: 503-988-3700

Address: 619 NW 6th Ave, 2nd Floor • Portland, OR 97209



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention



bacterial  
vaginosis  
THE FACTS



## THE FACTS

- Bacterial vaginosis (back TEER ee el / va gin NO sus) (BV) is a condition in which there is an overgrowth of some kinds of bacteria in the vagina. BV can cause symptoms such as vaginal discharge.
- BV is common in people with vaginas of childbearing age.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent BV or any sexually transmitted infection (STI).

## HOW CAN I LOWER MY RISK FOR BV?

Scientists do not fully understand BV and do not know the best ways to prevent it. However, it is known that having a new sex partner or having more than one sex partner increases your risk of getting BV.

To lower your risk of getting BV:

- Do not have sex.
- If you decide to be sexually active, limit the number of partners you have.
- Do not douche.
- Use all the medicine prescribed to treat BV, even if the symptoms go away.

## HOW DO PEOPLE GET BV?

Providers don't fully understand how people get BV. The infection may spread from one vagina to another during sex. Anyone can get BV, but you're at higher risk of getting it if:

- You have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners.
- You use an intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control.
- You douche.

People do not get BV from toilet seats, bedding, or swimming pools or from touching objects around them. People who have never had sex rarely get BV.

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF I HAVE BV?

A provider must examine you and take a sample of fluid from your vagina to determine if you have BV.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BV?

Some people with BV don't know they have it because they have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you might notice:

- An unusual discharge, with a strong fish-like smell, from your vagina. You are most likely to notice this after you have sex.
- Itching around your vagina.

## WHEN SHOULD I BE TESTED?

You should be tested for BV if you have any symptoms (like a vaginal discharge) or if your sex partners have BV or symptoms that could be BV.

## HOW IS BV TREATED?

- BV can be treated and cured with antibiotics.
- Finish all of your medicine to be sure you are cured.
- Do not share your medicine with anyone. You need all of it.
- If you still have symptoms after treatment, go back to see your provider.

## CAN I GET BV AGAIN AFTER I'VE BEEN TREATED?

Yes, you can get BV again.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GET TREATED?

- You may have a higher risk of getting another STI, such as chlamydia or gonorrhea.
- You may have a higher risk of getting HIV infection if you have unprotected sex with a partner living with HIV.