

Bacterial Vaginosis

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a condition caused by an overgrowth of normal vaginal bacteria. Since BV is caused by normal vaginal bacteria, it does not meet the definition of a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Frequent Signs & Symptoms

Approximately 50 to 75 percent of women with BV have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you may notice:

- A thin white or gray vaginal discharge
- Pain, itching, or burning in the vagina
- A strong fish-like odor, especially after sex
- Burning when urinating
- Itching around the outside of the vagina

Causes

BV is the common vaginal infection among women of childbearing age. This condition is when naturally occurring good vaginal bacteria (lactobacilli) is overcome by naturally occurring bad vaginal bacteria (anaerobic) such as *Gardnerella Vaginalis*.

Prevention

The best way to prevent BV is unknown, but following basic steps may help lower to your risk:

- Not having sex
- Limiting your number of sex partners
- Not douching
- Use of condoms with sex
- Finishing the entire treatment for BV, even if the symptoms resolve after a few doses

Diagnosis

Diagnosing BV is usually done with a physical exam and lab testing. The physical examination may include a pelvic examination which may include a vaginal swab. The physical exam will allow your provider to observe and test vaginal discharge. It can be difficult to determine if discharge is caused by BV or another vaginal infection without an exam and testing.

Health and Wellness Center

Doc Bryan Student Services Center,
Suite 119
1605 Coliseum Drive
Russellville, Arkansas 72801

Office: 479-968-0329

Fax: 479-967-6610

www.atu.edu/hwc

Treatment

Your health care provider will need to prescribe an antibiotic to treat BV. The most common treatment is Metronidazole (Flagyl) which can be prescribed in an oral or vaginal form. Notify your health care provider of any medication allergies you may have. If symptoms improve after treatment, a follow-up visit is not necessary.

Activity

Restricted activity is not necessary with BV, but it is recommended you not have sex for seven days after your treatment is completed. It is unknown if BV is spread through sex, but it is recommended your partner(s) be checked. This is even more important if your BV keeps coming back.

Complications

BV can cause serious health risks if left untreated, including:

- Increased risk of getting other STI's, such as HIV, herpes, chlamydia or gonorrhea
- Increased risk pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can make it difficult or impossible for you to get pregnant
- Preterm labor and premature birth
- Risk for other infection after gynecologic surgery

If symptoms worsen or do not improve, return to the clinic.

If you have worsening of symptoms when the Health and Wellness Center is unavailable, please follow up with the local ER or Urgent Care.