

Bacterial vaginosis



A healthy vagina contains many types of bacteria. Bacterial vaginosis is the result of a major change in the balance of these bacteria with some increasing and some decreasing. This may result in an unpleasant odour, discharge, or both.

How bacterial vaginosis is spread

Bacterial vaginosis is not considered to be a sexually transmitted infection, although it is associated with sexual activity. It is also associated with a change in sexual partner, having a partner with a vagina, not using condoms or other barrier methods, and douching.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms include:

- > a greyish vaginal discharge
- > an unpleasant 'fishy' odour. The odour is often more noticeable after sex or during menstruation, when the acidity of the vagina changes.

Painful intercourse and genital itch do not commonly occur with this condition.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by a vaginal examination and a microscopic examination of a sample of the vaginal discharge.

You've Got What? Bacterial vaginosis

Communicable Disease Control Branch

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The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat

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Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

The cause is not yet understood, so the time between whatever changes cause bacterial vaginosis and development of symptoms is unknown.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

Not transmitted to sexual partners.

Treatment

Bacterial vaginosis is not usually treated unless symptoms are a problem. Several treatments are available, both vaginal creams and tablets. Bacterial vaginosis may slightly increase the risk of complications in pregnancy and of developing infections after gynaecologic surgery and in these situations your doctor may consider the need for you to have treatment for bacterial vaginosis.

Vinegar or Aci-Jel vaginal jelly help to relieve symptoms but are not useful for treatment or prevention.

Sexual partners do not need to be treated.

Prevention

Avoiding vaginal douching may help, in addition avoiding the use of shower gel, antiseptic agents and shampoo in the bath.



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG* for consumers and the community – October 2023

*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



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