

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS (BV) FACT SHEET

What is BV?

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is caused by an imbalance of the normal bacteria found in the vagina. This imbalance then lets many other types of bacteria grow. BV is common in sexually active women but is not considered to be sexually transmitted.

What are the symptoms?

Half of the women with BV have no symptoms even though BV may show up on a test. If there are symptoms, they can include:

- fishy smell (sometimes more noticeable after sex)
- white or grayish watery vaginal discharge (sometimes large amounts)
- pain, burning or itching in the vagina (not common)

How is it diagnosed?

BV is diagnosed by having swabs taken from the vagina. This is important because there are vaginal infections with similar symptoms.

How do I deal with BV?

Women with symptoms or ongoing problems should see a doctor. They may be treated with prescription pills called metronidazole.

There are also some lifestyle changes that can decrease symptoms. (See back of page for “Vaginal Health”).

Women having pelvic surgery, having an intrauterine contraceptive device inserted or who are pregnant should be

treated. Medications (pills or creams) that you can buy in the drugstore for yeast infections do not work for BV.

Do not drink alcohol (wine, beer, liquor) while taking metronidazole and for 24 hours after taking medication. This medication can cause a metallic taste in the mouth and dryness in the mouth and vagina.

Do not have sex during the treatment.

If the symptoms keep coming back and are hard to treat, you might want to keep a diary of your symptoms and your activities. This allows you to:

- compare the amount of discharge and other symptoms over time
- see if there are patterns
- link symptoms with activities

Talk to a health care professional about vaginal health and further treatment.

Are there complications

Having a procedure such as an intrauterine contraceptive device inserted, pelvic surgery or an abortion when you have BV has been linked to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). BV in pregnant females may also be associated with premature delivery. Having BV may also increase the risk of getting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) if you are exposed.

**See the other side for
“Vaginal Health”**

For further information, talk to your health care professional or call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 or visit peelsexualhealth.ca or peelregion.ca/health