



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Vaginosis is an infection of the vagina. Bacterial vaginosis (BV) implies that any of several infecting bacteria, have caused the infection. It was previously called nonspecific vaginitis or Gardnerella-associated vaginitis. Bacterial vaginosis affects all ages, but most often occurs during reproductive years. It may cause vaginitis which has symptoms of soreness, itching and irritation.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Approximately 50% of women with bacterial vaginosis have no symptoms.
- Vaginal discharge that sometimes has an unpleasant odor (referred to as a “fishy” smell). The color and amount of discharge varies greatly from woman to woman.

CAUSES

Bacterial vaginosis is caused by an overgrowth of bacteria rather than yeast or other organisms. For various reasons, there is a shift in the bacterial population of normal vaginal bacteria or by a change in the pH balance. Vaginosis can arise and remit spontaneously in sexually active and non-active women. It is not regarded as a sexually transmitted disease, but sexual activity has been linked to development of this infection. It can be caused by several different types of bacteria including *Gardnerella vaginalis*, *Mycoplasma hominis* and *Mobiluncus species*.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Women with an intra-uterine contraceptive device (IUD).
- Smokers.
- Early age at first intercourse.
- Higher number of lifetime sexual partners, new sexual partner, or increase in number of sexual partners in the month before diagnosis.
- Recent use of antibiotic medications.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- There are no specific preventive measures. The following general measures may help in preventing bacterial vaginosis or other vaginal disorders.
- Using condoms with new sexual partners helps to protect against various infections, possibly including bacterial vaginosis.
- Keep the genital area clean. Use plain unscented soap. Be sure sexual partner is clean. Avoid vaginal douching.
- Take showers rather than tub baths. If you do take a bath, don't use antiseptic agents or shampoo in the bath water.
- Wear cotton underpants or pantyhose with a cotton crotch.
- Don't sit around in wet clothing, such as wet bathing suit.
- After urination or bowel movements, cleanse by wiping or washing from front to back (vagina to anus).
- Change tampons or pads frequently.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Treatment with antibacterial medication for seven days provides a safe and effective cure.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Bacterial vaginosis may recur after an apparent recovery (relapsing and remitting) and may persist for several months. It can be cured after repeated treatments.
- Co-infection with another vaginal disorder such as chlamydia or gonorrhea. Bacterial vaginosis may be the cause of up to one half of cases of vaginitis.
- May cause postoperative infection following hysterectomy and postabortion pelvic inflammatory disease.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory studies of vaginal discharge, Pap smear and pelvic examination. Other causes of vaginal discharge will need to be ruled out. Advise your doctor about your use of any spermicides, perfumed soaps and powders, or frequent douching. These can cause vaginal problems.
- Treatment is usually recommended for women who have symptoms, women undergoing surgical procedures, and some pregnant women.
- This disorder will be carefully evaluated and treated when it does occur in a pregnant woman. It is associated with preterm delivery, low birth weight and other problems.
- Testing and treating male sexual partners is usually not recommended.
- Douches or deodorant sprays that mask vaginal odor should not be used to treat BV. They may eliminate the odor but will not cure the condition.
- For more information, check the library or the internet.

MEDICATION

Metronidazole (Flagyl) or clindamycin (Cleocin) are often prescribed for treatment of bacterial vaginosis. They are available in both an oral and topical form and are equally effective in nonpregnant women.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has a vaginal discharge.
- Symptoms persist longer than 1 week or worsen, despite treatment.
- Unusual vaginal bleeding or swelling develops.