

# Bacterial Vaginosis

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## Description

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is a common vaginal condition which arises from an alteration in the normal distribution of bacteria which make up the vaginal environment. The exact cause of this syndrome is unknown. Transmission of bacterial vaginosis through sex is not well correlated, and the benefit of treating sexual partners has not been conclusively shown. Women who have never been sexually active may develop bacterial vaginosis.

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## Symptoms

Bacterial Vaginosis is characterized by the following symptoms:

- Gray/white, thin vaginal discharge
- Fishy or musty odor, more noticeable after intercourse or during menses

*Although these signs are used to characterize bacterial vaginosis, it is important to note that many women with no symptoms may have this condition.*

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## Diagnosis

A sample of the vaginal discharge is obtained during a pelvic exam and is examined. The discharge of BV is less acidic than usual, and contains bacterial covered cells called "clue cells". In addition, the discharge often gives off a fishy odor when a chemical called potassium hydroxide is added. Your medical provider may also perform tests to rule out other causes of discharge, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia.

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## Treatment

Bacterial vaginosis is treated with antibiotics which can be taken orally or as vaginal creams or gels. The most commonly used antibiotics are metronidazole (Flagyl) or Clindamycin. During the treatment, it is best to avoid sexual intercourse or have your partner use a condom. Because it is not usually spread through sexual contact, a male partner will typically be treated only if a woman has recurrent infections.

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## Prevention

The following are general guidelines to prevent vaginal infections:

- Wear cotton underwear and avoid wearing tight clothing
- Do not douche or use feminine hygiene products
- Keep the vaginal area dry and clean but be aware that too much soap and water can dry out the skin
- Always wipe from front to back after urination or bowel movement

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## For More Information:

Student Health Services . . . . .	619-594-5281	American Social Health Association (ASHA)	
Health Promotion. . . . .	619-594-4133	National STD Hotline. . . . .	800-227-8922
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Facebook/Twitter. . . . .	Facebook.com/aztehealth & @AZTEHealth		