

Bacterial vaginosis is a condition that affects women only. It is not sexually transmissible.

Bacterial Vaginosis

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What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is a condition caused by an imbalance of normal flora (bacteria) in the vagina. Sexual activity can cause this imbalance because semen can make the bacteria overgrow.

Are there any symptoms?

Sometimes there are symptoms such as an unusual vaginal discharge or an unpleasant smell. Often there are no symptoms at all.

How is it transmitted?

Bacterial vaginosis is not sexually transmissible so it cannot be given to someone or caught.

How is it prevented?

Women can reduce the chance of developing bacterial vaginosis if they:

- use a condom during sex
- avoid douching
- clean sex toys between use
- avoid using perfumed oils, soaps, gels and creams on their genitals
- change sanitary pads or tampons regularly

Go for a regular check-up to find infections before complications develop and to prevent transmission to others. Always use condoms.

How is it diagnosed?

Usually, a doctor or nurse will take a swab (using a long cotton bud) from the vagina and send it for laboratory testing.

How is it treated?

Bacterial vaginosis is treated with antibiotics or by applying a cream. It is important to finish the course of antibiotics, even if the symptoms go away. If there are no symptoms, or the symptoms are not causing problems, then treatment is not necessary. Visit a doctor to discuss treatment options.

Bacterial vaginosis is associated with an increased risk of premature birth, so pregnant woman with symptoms should be tested. Bacterial vaginosis also increases the risk of complications following gynaecological procedures and for this reason, women with signs of bacterial vaginosis may be treated prior to the procedure.

The information in this fact sheet is general and you should see a doctor if you are worried about your health.

Contact

NSW Sexual Health Infoline freecall **1800 451 624**.