



What is vaginitis?

Vaginitis is characterized by inflammation of the vagina that can result in discharge, itching, and pain.¹ Bacterial vaginosis is the most common cause of vaginal symptoms among women ages 15 – 44 years.² 84% of women who have bacterial vaginosis reported no symptoms.² Researchers do not know the cause of bacterial vaginitis or how some women get the infection, but it typically occurs in women who are sexually active.³

Treatment

Vaginosis will sometimes go away without any treatment, but if you have symptoms you should be checked and treated by a physician.³ Bacterial vaginosis can be treated with antibiotics but may recur even after treatment.³

If left untreated, bacterial vaginosis can cause health risks including³:

- Increased chance of getting HIV
- Premature birth of baby
- Increased chance of getting other STDs, such as Chlamydia and gonorrhea
- Can sometimes cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can make it difficult to have children

Pregnant women

Pregnant women can get bacterial vaginosis.³ Pregnant women with bacterial vaginosis are more likely to have a baby who is born prematurely or with low birth weight compared to pregnant women who do not have bacterial vaginosis.³ This makes it especially important for pregnant women to be treated with antibiotics for vaginosis.³

Transmission

Bacterial vaginosis is most common in women aged 15 – 44 years.² Bacterial vaginosis is linked to an imbalance of “good” and “harmful” bacteria that are normally found in a woman’s vagina:³

- Bacterial vaginosis rarely affects women who have never had sex.³
- Having bacterial vaginosis increases your chances of getting other STDs.³
- You **cannot** get bacterial vaginosis from toilet seats, bedding or swimming pools.³

Steps to lower risk of transmission³:

- Not having sex
- Limiting the number of sexual partners
- Not douching

Prevalence

Bacterial vaginosis was estimated to have affected roughly 21.2 million, or 29.2% of, women aged 14 – 49 years from 2001 to 2004.²

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2001 – 2004) found that²:

- 84% of women with bacterial vaginosis had no symptoms.
- Women who have not had vaginal, oral or anal sex can still be affected by bacterial vaginosis.
- Risk of bacterial vaginosis increases based on number of sexual partners.
- Non-white women have higher rates of bacterial vaginosis than white women.

Fast facts

- Bacterial vaginosis is caused when too much of certain bacteria change the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina.²
- Vaginitis is characterized by inflammation of the vagina that can result in discharge, itching and pain.¹
- Vaginosis can have serious health risks if left untreated, especially putting you at risk of contracting other STDs.³
- Women who are pregnant and have bacterial vaginosis are at an increased risk of having a premature delivery or a low birth weight baby.³

References

1. Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/vaginitis/home/ovc-20258665>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/std/bv/stats.htm>.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/std/bv/stdfact-bacterial-vaginosis.htm>.