

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is bacterial vaginosis?

Your vagina has different kinds of bacteria. Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is when some bacteria grows more than other bacteria. BV can be treated with medicine. Most of the time, BV is not a big deal. But it can lead to problems if you do not treat it.

What causes bacterial vaginosis?

Sometimes BV just happens. Douching, using scented products, smoking, or sex can bring on BV.

How do I know if I have bacterial vaginosis?

If you have BV, you may have:

- A fishy smell
- Itchiness, redness or swelling
- White or gray discharge
- Burning or irritation when you pee or have sex

You may not have any signs of BV. The only way to know if you have BV for sure is to see your doctor. Your doctor may do a pelvic exam or take a sample from your vagina or cervix.

How can I treat bacterial vaginosis?

You can take pills or use a cream to treat BV. You and your doctor will decide which treatment is best for you. Take your medicine exactly how your doctor tells you to, even if you are feeling better.

How can I prevent bacterial vaginosis?

1. **Wear cotton underwear.** Try to avoid underwear made from other fabrics.
2. **Wipe front to back.** When you wipe back to front, you can bring unhealthy bacteria into your vagina. This can raise the chance of BV.
3. **Don't douche, use scented products, or try to clean the inside of your vagina.** Douching and scented products kill healthy bacteria in your vagina. The vagina stays clean on its own. You do not need to clean the inside of your vagina.
4. **Use condoms and dental dams.** These can lower your chance of BV.
5. **Try probiotics.** Probiotics help your body make more healthy bacteria. You can get probiotics in yogurt, kefir, or by taking probiotic pills. Talk to your CHN doctor or nutritionist to learn more.

Talk to your CHN health educator or doctor if you have questions.