

Vaginosis

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

This is a common condition in women caused by an overgrowth of bacteria that normally live in the vagina. This can happen if the acid level in the vagina falls.

What causes it?

The cause of BV is not known. It is not sexually transmitted but is seen in women. As BV can occur when there are changes to the p/h level (acid/alkaline balance) medicated or perfumed soaps, bubble bath or shower gel, or the use of strong detergents on underwear may be a contributing factor. Hormone changes may also play a part.

What are the symptoms?

- Many women may not notice any symptoms. It is not associated with pain, itching or irritation.
- There may be a vaginal discharge which is usually thin and grey or white in colour.
- You may also notice an unpleasant 'fishy' smell especially after sex.

What other problems can it cause?

- Generally there are no long-term problems with BV although it may recur and this can be distressing.
- Women with BV in pregnancy may have a low birth weight or premature baby. These women should have a test for BV in future pregnancies.

- BV has been associated with Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) in women having procedures such as termination of pregnancy or IUD insertion. Many doctors will test for BV before these procedures are performed.
- BV may also be associated with an increased risk of HIV infection.

What tests do you do?

BV is diagnosed by taking a swab from the vagina which is then examined under a microscope. Sometimes it is also identified during a cervical screening test.

What is the Treatment?

BV may clear up without treatment but it can reappear. Treatment can be offered to all women with symptoms and consists of antibiotics. In recurring cases a gel or cream may be used instead of tablets, however, preferred treatment would be discussed with the woman upon the recurring episode.