



## **Bacterial Vaginosis**

### **What is bacterial vaginosis?**

Bacterial vaginosis is the most common type of vaginal infection. It occurs when the natural balance of organisms in the vagina is changed. Women who have bacterial vaginosis have an increase in the number of potentially harmful bacteria and a decrease in the number of normal, protective lactobacilli in their vagina. Bacterial vaginosis is **not** a sexually transmitted disease.

### **What are the symptoms of bacterial vaginosis?**

The most common symptom is a foul or “fishy” odor. This odor is usually increased after intercourse. Another common symptom is an excessive white or gray discharge with a milk-like consistency that can stain undergarments. Some women do experience some itching and burning. Occasionally, the infection may be found during a routine pelvic exam in a woman without symptoms.

### **How is bacterial vaginosis treated?**

Bacterial vaginosis is treated by prescription only. Do not use over-the-counter douches or sprays that mask vaginal odor. The most common medication used is metronidazole which can be taken by mouth or intravaginally. The most common side effects of metronidazole are upset stomach, headache, dizziness and a metallic taste in the mouth. When taking metronidazole, avoid alcohol during treatment and 3 days thereafter.

### **Does my partner need to be treated?**

Since bacterial vaginosis is not thought to be caused by sexual intercourse, sexual partners are not treated. If the condition recurs after treatment, treating sexual partners can be considered.

### **What can I do to help prevent recurrences of bacterial vaginosis?**

Just like yeast infections, many women will experience recurrences of bacterial vaginosis. It is unclear why or how these recurrences occur. Some suggestions for good vaginal health are:

- Avoid spreading bacteria from the rectum to the vagina. After a bowel movement wipe from front to back. Don't rewipe with the same toilet tissue.
- Avoid douches, harsh soaps, or feminine sprays.
- Avoid tight fitting clothing.

### **For more information on the internet:**

<http://www.4woman.gov/faq/stdbv.htm>

