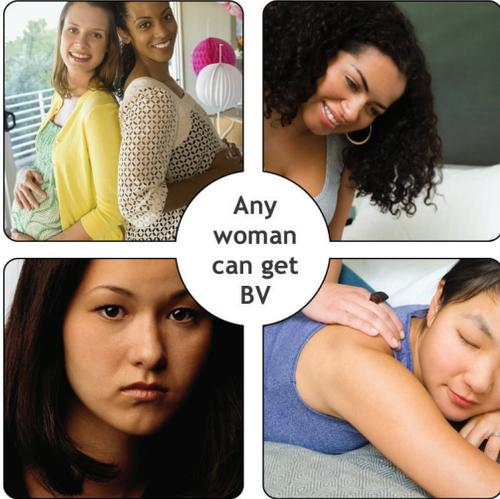


Bacterial Vaginosis – CDC Fact Sheet



Any woman can get bacterial vaginosis. Having bacterial vaginosis can increase your chance of getting an STD.



What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a condition that happens when there is too much of certain bacteria in the vagina. This changes the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina.

How common is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is the most common vaginal infection in women ages 15-44.

How is bacterial vaginosis spread?

Researchers do not know the cause of BV or how some women get it. We do know that the infection typically occurs in sexually active women. BV is linked to an imbalance of “good” and “harmful” bacteria that are normally found in a woman's vagina. Having a new sex partner or multiple sex partners, as well as douching, can upset the balance of bacteria in the vagina. This places a woman at increased risk for getting BV..

We also do not know how sex contributes to BV. There is no research to show that treating a sex partner affects whether or not a woman gets BV. Having BV can increase your chances of getting other STDs.

BV rarely affects women who have never had sex

You cannot get BV from toilet seats, bedding, or swimming pools.

How can I avoid getting bacterial vaginosis?

Doctors and scientists do not completely understand how BV is spread. There are no known best ways to prevent it.

The following basic prevention steps *may* help lower your risk of developing BV:

- Not having sex;
- Limiting your number of sex partners; and
- Not douching.

I'm pregnant. How does bacterial vaginosis affect my baby?

Pregnant women can get BV. Pregnant women with BV are more likely to have babies born premature (early) or with low birth weight than pregnant women without BV. Low birth weight means having a baby that weighs less than 5.5 pounds at birth.

Treatment is especially important for pregnant women.

