

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

What is it?

- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is the most common vaginal infection in women of childbearing age.
- The cause of BV is not fully understood. BV is associated with an imbalance in the bacteria that are normally found in a woman's vagina. The vagina normally contains mostly "good" bacteria, and fewer "harmful" bacteria. BV develops when there is a change in the environment of the vagina that causes an increase in harmful bacteria.

What are the signs and symptoms

- Some women do not know that they have Bacterial Vaginosis.
- Others may complain of an excessive and /or foul smelling vaginal discharge. These are the two most common symptoms.
- Other signs and symptoms include redness, swelling and itching on the outside of the vagina.

Testing

- The only way to know for sure if you have BV is to go to a health provider to get tested.
- Medical tests for BV are available. A sample of discharge from the vagina can be collected and examined under a microscope by a health provider to detect BV.

Treatment

- The primary goal in treating Bacterial Vaginosis is to relieve vaginal symptoms and signs of infection.
- Your health provider will prescribe an antibiotic and/or a vaginal cream.
- Make sure that you take all the pills that you are given or use all the cream you are given. BV may come back if you don't.
- For testing and treatment for Bacterial Vaginosis in the Philadelphia area, click [here](#) for a list of local family planning clinics. Outside of Philadelphia, please click [here](#) for a clinic near you www.plannedparenthood.org.

How Can I Prevent Bacterial Vaginosis?

- Sometimes you may get BV no matter what you do. But the following tips may help you avoid it:
 - Keep your vaginal area clean and dry. Wash daily with warm water, rinse well and pat dry.

- Don't use douches, strong soaps, deodorants or sprays.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Don't wear tight fitting clothing.
- Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement.

REMINDER: Using a condom consistently can help to protect you from STD's including Bacterial Vaginosis.