



Annandale OBGYN
703-642-7522
annandaleobgyn.com

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis, or BV, is a condition in which the normal balance of vaginal bacteria has shifted and causes a higher than normal vaginal pH. The concentration of your healthy bacteria (Lactobacilli) decrease, while the numbers of other bacteria increase. The reason for these changes is not known, but risk factors include sexual activity (especially with multiple partners), douching or the use of vaginal cleansers, and cigarette smoking.

BV is the most common cause of abnormal vaginal discharge in premenopausal women, accounting for 40-50% of cases. It is frequently associated with bothersome symptoms including unpleasant vaginal odor, thin vaginal discharge, burning, and itching.

How is it Diagnosed and Treated?

If you have symptoms of BV, you must be seen in office for a pelvic exam so that your provider may observe and test vaginal discharge. Without an examination and testing, it is difficult to know if your symptoms are caused by BV or another infection, such as a yeast infection or an STI.

Self treatment with over-the-counter products is not recommended and may make your symptoms worse. If your testing confirms a diagnosis of BV, you will be treated with antibiotics.

Why Does BV Keep Coming Back?

Recurrent BV infections are common and more than 50% of women will have a repeat infection within 1 year of treatment. You can prevent recurrent BV by making sure you correctly take the full dose of your antibiotic treatment for your initial infection. Options to reduce the risk of BV also include regularly using condoms with sexual partners and washing any sex toys after every use. It is also recommended to switch to non-scented, gentle cleansers and detergents and to avoid any douching.

There are alternative treatments for recurrent BV including longer courses of antibiotics, boric acid, lactic acid, and vaginal probiotics that should be discussed with your provider.