

# FEMALE UROLOGY

O F N A S H V I L L E

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## Bacterial Vaginosis

*What is bacterial vaginosis?* Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a change in the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina with overgrowth of bad bacteria. It is the most common cause of vaginal discharge and odor.

*What bacteria are supposed to be in the vagina?* Lactobacilli are the good bacteria of the vagina (probiotics). They produce lactic acid keeping the vaginal mildly acidic thereby preventing overgrowth of bad bacteria.

*How common is bacterial vaginosis?* Bacterial vaginosis is the most common vaginal infection in women ages 15-44. 29% of women age 15-49 have had bacterial vaginosis.

*How is bacterial vaginosis spread?* Researchers do not know the cause of BV or how some women get it, but we do know the infection is more common in sexually active women.

*How can I avoid getting bacterial vaginosis?* The following basic prevention steps may help lower your risk of developing BV: use condoms with sex, limit your number of sex partners, stop douching, increase probiotics in your diet or take oral probiotic capsules containing Lactobacilli.

*How do I know if I have bacterial vaginosis?* Many women (84%) with BV do not have symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you may notice a thin white or gray vaginal discharge, odor, pain, itching, urinary urgency and frequency or burning in the vagina or with urination.

*How is bacterial vaginosis treated?* Traditional treatment is with vaginal or oral antibiotics such as metronidazole or clindamycin. Male sex partners of women diagnosed with BV do not need to be treated.

*Are there any natural remedies for BV?* In addition to probiotics, studies have shown effective treatment with garlic tablets by mouth for seven days, boric acid vaginal suppositories nightly for two weeks and hydrogen peroxide 3% 30ml vaginal washings nightly for seven days. Although no studies have been done, it is known that tea tree oil can be effective as well; however, many people are allergic to tea tree oil so test for an allergy by applying the oil to your skin and watch the area for 24-48 hours before using intravaginally.

*What can be done for recurrent BV?* Using probiotics containing the good bacteria Lactobacilli intravaginally for two weeks per month for four months has been shown to significantly decrease recurrence of BV. Probiotics should also be incorporated in your diet on a regular basis. If you are postmenopausal, the healthy vaginal environment needs to be restored with medications or the Mona Lisa Touch laser vaginal treatments.

*How do I increase my probiotics?* Foods containing probiotics include: yogurt (watch the sugar!), apple cider vinegar, dark chocolate, cultured cottage cheese, garlic, kefir, kimchi, kombucha tea, mango, miso, pickles (watch the salt!), sauerkraut, fresh sourdough bread, tempeh. If you are unable to add these foods to your diet, you can also take probiotic capsules containing Lactobacilli: VSL-3, BlueBiotics Ultimate Care, Ultimate Flora VS, Trubiotics.