Bacterial Vaginosis

A Common Type of Vaginal Infection

Vaginitis (vaj-uh-nahy-tis) is an infection or inflammation of the vagina.

Bacterial vaginosis (vaj-uh-no-sis) is one of three most common types of vaginitis.

Women infected with bacterial vaginosis are at greater risk of getting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In pregnant women, it may also lead to premature birth and babies born with a low birth weight.

What are the signs?
Vaginitis may cause:
- Vaginal itching or irritation
- Unusual discharge (fluids) from the vagina that has a bad odor

Many women have no signs and only find out they have it during an annual exam by their gynecologist. It’s important to see your gynecologist once a year.

What causes bacterial vaginosis?
It is caused by too much bacteria growing in the vagina. The bacteria can spread during sex.

Who is at higher risk?
- Women with new or many sex partners
- Women who use an intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control
- Women who use products (e.g., douches) to clean the vagina

What to do if you have bacterial vaginosis?
Your doctor will prescribe some medicine and tell you what to do.

Avoid baths, hot tubs and whirlpool spas.
Rinse your outer genital area with clean water, and dry the area well.
Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
Don’t use harsh soaps, scented tampons and pads.
Don’t use douches or other products to clean your vagina.
Use a male condom while having sex.
Eat yogurt to raise lactosbacilli (a type of good bacteria) in your body.

Here are some tips that can help prevent it from coming back and relieve some of the discomfort:

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