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# **Sex And Bacterial Vaginosis**

It's understandable to fear you've caught an STD when you're really just having symptoms of bacterial vaginosis. You might be particularly concerned if you notice bacterial vaginosis symptoms soon after you start having sex with someone new - a common pattern with bacterial vaginosis.

But bacterial vaginosis (BV for short) is not a sexually transmitted disease. Instead, it's the overgrowth of normal vaginal bacteria. All women have bacteria in the vagina. These bacteria are part of the normal vaginal ecosystem. When some types of these normal bacteria overgrow, the result is BV.

Bacterial vaginosis symptoms include:

Increased vaginal discharge, usually watery and gray or green  
Strong alkaline or "fishy" odor, which can come and go  
Burning of the vulvar tissue  
itching (this is not very common)

The vagina is normally acidic, helping to keep the bacteria in normal volumes. If the pH of the vagina becomes alkaline, the bacteria overgrow. Bacteria love an alkaline environment. Things that can increase vaginal alkalinity are:

Menstruation. Blood is alkaline. If your periods are heavy and long, exposure to blood may raise the vaginal pH to a higher alkaline level, so the bacteria can overgrow. The alkaline odor may be particularly strong during your period.  
Frequent sexual intercourse between a male and female. Sperm is also alkaline. The sperm can alter the pH of the vagina to be more alkaline. With frequent exposure to an alkaline substance, the bacteria can overgrow. After sex, you or your partner may notice a stronger alkaline odor.  
During menopause, women are more prone to BV because the vagina becomes alkaline due to hormone changes.

How is BV treated?

First, it is important that you see your provider to make sure you have BV. There are several antibiotics used to treat BV. Treating the partner is not usually necessary. Remember, he didn't give you an infection but the sperm promotes BV by altering the pH of the vagina.

If exposure to alkaline substances continues, BV can recur after treatment.

What are some basic things you can do to prevent BV?

If you have heavy periods, talk to your provider about reducing the blood flow of your period. Your provider has many options to offer. If you are having frequent sex, use a condom to reduce the exposure of the alkaline sperm in the vagina. For example, if you have sex 3 times a week, consider using a condom 2 of those times. (If you are using a condom to prevent STDs, then you need to use it all the time!) If you are menopausal, consider local estrogen to help keep the vagina acidic. Local estrogen comes in the form of a cream, pill or acrylic ring that you insert in the vagina.

Bacterial vaginosis can be very frustrating for some women because it can be recurring. We are not sure why some women get it so frequently. Remember, promoting an acid environment in the vagina helps to prevent BV. Free [Medical Advice](#) published By [Dr Vivienne Balonwu](#).

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