Treatment of vaginitis

| The inflammation of the vagina | Application of antibacterial vaginal suppositories | A healthy vagina |

Can it be treated?

Yes, BV can be treated but the treatment can vary depending on several factors.

If a woman does not have any symptoms, in most cases no treatment is required.

However, if a woman is about to have any kind of gynaecological procedure (such as an IUD insertion or removal or pre-term evacuation) where the risk of infection spreading to the uterus (womb) is higher, then any BV infection should be treated first.

What is the treatment?

The standard treatment for bacterial vaginosis is a seven day course of Metronidazole.

It is important to take the full course of tablets. You should not drink alcohol during treatment and as always when run down you should try to take a high nutrition diet.

SANITAS HOSPITAL
Keeping Africa Healthy

Sexual Health

Informing Patients Pamphlet series

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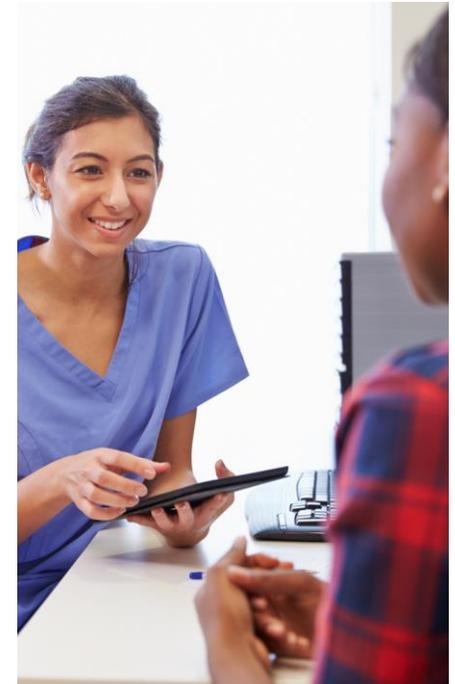
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BV

Bacterial vaginosis is a mild infection of the vagina caused by bacteria. Normally, there are a lot of "good" bacteria and some "bad" bacteria in the vagina. The good types help control the growth of the bad types. In women with bacterial vaginosis, the balance is upset. There are not enough good bacteria and too many bad bacteria.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

What is Bacterial Vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is caused by an overgrowth of bacteria that are normally only present in the vagina in small numbers. When these bacteria are present in large numbers they may cause symptoms such as an abnormal discharge or odour.

Bacterial vaginosis is sometimes called non-specific vaginitis or Gardnerella vaginitis.

What causes BV?

It is not clear whether bacterial vaginosis is sexually transmitted, but it is more common in women with more than one sexual partner.

It often develops soon after intercourse with a new partner and can be associated with other sexually transmitted infections.

It is also common in women who have sex with other women and it is possible that bacteria may be transmitted on fingers or sex toys.

Other associated factors with BV include:

- Use of broad spectrum antibiotics
- Decreased Oestrogen production (eg. Post-menopause)
- The western practice of 'douching'
- Intrauterine Devices
- Not using condoms
- An elevated PH, >4.5, within the vagina

"..basically the more things you put in there, the more vulnerable you are to some kind of infection..."

What are the symptoms?

Many women with bacterial vaginosis do not have any symptoms. Bacterial vaginosis does not typically cause itching. But it does cause:

- An increase in normal vaginal secretions (fluid leaking from the vagina).
- There may be a strong odour from the vagina, and the smell may be worse after unprotected sex.

Some women may not have any symptoms.

Other infections may be present at the same time as bacterial vaginosis and may have similar symptoms. It is therefore important to take tests to rule out sexually transmitted infections as well.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

Lactobacillus 95%   Gardnerella vaginalis

healthy vaginal mucosa   bacterial vaginosis

Are there any complications?

Bacterial vaginosis often clears up on its own. But in some women it doesn't go away on its own. And for many women it comes back after it has cleared up. Antibiotic treatment works for some women but not others.

Your risk of complications from bacterial vaginosis is higher:

- During pregnancy. *Compared to pregnant women who don't have it, women who have bacterial vaginosis during pregnancy have a higher risk of early (preterm) delivery or of uterine infection after pregnancy, or of having a miscarriage.*

- After Gynaecological surgery. *Women with bacterial vaginosis at the time of an invasive vaginal procedure have an increased risk of developing more serious infection or inflammation, such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) or endometritis.*

- When exposed to HIV or other sexually transmitted infection. *Women who have bacterial vaginosis when they are exposed to sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) have an increased risk of becoming infected with the sexually transmitted infection.*