

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is a common vaginal infection caused by an abnormal growth of natural bacteria found in the vagina. Bacteria vaginosis is not caused by yeast, trichomonas, or gonorrhoea. Over-the-counter products such as yeast medicine cannot treat bacterial vaginosis.

Some things that can change the balance of natural bacteria in the vagina are:

- taking antibiotics or other drugs,
- being run down or sick,
- the vagina being sore from sex or perfumed soaps and sprays, or
- douching.

Symptoms

You may notice:

- itching and swelling of the vagina and vaginal lips (vulva),
- a white, yellow, or grey discharge,
- a fishy odour, or
- sex may be painful.

Many women do not have any symptoms.

Treatment

Bacterial vaginosis is usually treated with a drug called Flagyl (also called Metronidazole). See drug information sheet on back page. You are treated if you have symptoms that bother you. Your sexual partner is usually not treated.

Prevention

Here are some ways to help prevent bacterial vaginosis:

- Wash your vulva every day. Always wipe from front to back.
- Do not use perfumed vaginal sprays, soap, or bubble bath.
- Do not douche, unless your doctor tells you to.
- Use a condom every time you have sex to prevent STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).
- Use water-soluble lubricant or contraceptive foam if sexual intercourse is painful.
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have.

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Kingston
221 Portsmouth Avenue
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5
Tel: 613-549-1232
1-800-267-7875
Fax: 613-549-7896

Cloyne
P.O. Box 59
14209 Highway 41
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0
Tel: 613-336-8989
Fax: 613-336-0522

Napanee
41 Dundas Street
Napanee, ON
K7R 1Z5
Tel: 613-354-3357
Fax: 354-6267

Sharbot Lake
P.O. Box 149
1130 Elizabeth Street
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0
Tel: 613-279-2151
Fax: 613-279-3997

Metronidazole (Flagyl)

(This is an antibiotic antiprotozoan amebicide medicine)

Do NOT take this medication:

- If you are pregnant,
- if you are allergic to Metronidazole,
- with alcohol. Avoid alcohol (alcoholic beverages or cough syrup) 24 hours before you start, while taking and for 24 hours after you finish your medication. Alcohol and metronidazole increase the risk of side effects (stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, headache, flushing, increased heart rate, and light-headedness).

How to take it:

- Take with food
- Finish all your prescription even if you feel better
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as remembered, unless it is almost time for the next dose
- Do not double up dose

Precautions for everyone:

- Side effects include a metallic taste in the mouth (suck on ice chips or hard candies), gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, appetite loss), and skin rash.
- Call your doctor if you experience tingling or numbness in the hands or feet.
- Metronidazole can interact with other medications. Tell your doctor if you are taking anti-coagulants, antihistamines, anticonvulsants, lithium, and birth control pills.