

Bacterial Vaginosis

What is it?

This is a common condition in women and is caused by an overgrowth of bacteria that live normally in the bowel but may be found in the vagina. The organisms often multiply in the vagina when the acid level falls.

How can it be recognised?

Bacterial vaginosis may cause a white to grey discharge with an unpleasant 'fish' or stale odour. Vulval irritation can occur and sex may be uncomfortable. Bacterial vaginosis is diagnosed by examination by testing the pH of the vaginal fluid, and confirmed by swabs. It may also be detected on a routine Pap smear.

How is it managed?

Bacterial vaginosis does not have to be treated if it is not bothering you.

If it is a problem your doctor may prescribe antibiotics in the form of tablets or vaginal cream.

The FPWA clinic or your doctor may also recommend treatment if you are planning to have an IUD fitted or any gynaecological operation (eg a curette or an abortion).

Some women find it helpful to attempt to restore the acidity of the vagina with natural yoghurt or an acid gel from the pharmacy.

Practising safe sex reduces the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

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For further information on sexual health visit the family planning website:
<http://www.fpwa-health.org.au>

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