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Bacterial Vaginosis

What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) occurs when unwanted bacteria overgrow the healthy flora with lactic acid bacteria and disrupt your harmonious vaginal microbiome.

While most women with BV have symptoms, others may have BV without any symptoms.

What makes a normal vaginal microbiome can vary depending on ethnicity.

How common is it?

About a third of all women between the ages of 15 and 49 have BV. However, about half of them have no complaints whatsoever.

What causes BV and what are the risk factors?

BV occurs when your vaginal microbiome gets out of balance and bad bacteria outnumber the number of good bacteria. That means instead of a lot of lactic acid bacteria (a protective type of good bacteria), you end up with an overgrowth of naturally occurring bacteria that live without oxygen

(like *Gardnerella vaginalis* or *Atopobium vaginae*).

Because different bacteria can be present, it is difficult to test for a particular bacterium.

The result is a combination of bothersome symptoms such as abnormal discharge, itching, pain during sex or urination, and a less pleasant smell.

A number of things can disrupt the normal balance of your vaginal bacteria and favor BV. The main risks are:

- Sex with multiple partners (regardless of gender) or with a new partner.
- vaginal douches.
- Naturally low in lactic acid bacteria.
- Low estrogen levels, e.g. due to the loss of one or both ovaries. This reduces the production of glycogen - the food source of good bacteria.

- Low estrogen levels such as during ovulation, before menstruation or after the menopause.

What are the symptoms?

- Itch.
- Pain during intercourse or urination.
- Abnormal discharge. In BV it is white or gray and much thinner than in a fungal infection and is commonly described as having a fishy smell. The pH value is above 4.5.

How is it diagnosed?

If you have such symptoms, your doctor or even yourself may perform a vaginal pH test:

Anything above 4.5 is too high, can not be a fungal infection, but a bacterial vaginosis.

What are the treatment options?

After diagnosis, your doctor may prescribe disinfectant suppositories or antibiotics to eliminate BV. Depending

on the drug, these can be administered as pills or vaginal suppositories – but antibiotics also often affect the healthy microbiome.

- Probiotika können hilfreich sein, um die Vagina wieder mit gesunden Laktobazillen zu bevölkern.

What can be done to prevent BV?

- To avoid getting BV in the first place, practice safe sex,
- talk to your partner about sexual health and
- use barrier protection correctly (i.e. condoms).



To protect yourself from bacterial vaginosis, avoid upsetting the balance of protective lactic acid bacteria in the vaginal microbiome by restricting the use of vaginal showers, as well as the use of fragrant soaps, tampons, or pads. Try to avoid anything that irritates your vagina or upsets the bacterial balance.



The regular preventive use of BE-TADINE BV vaginal gel (when the estrogen levels are low: i.e. at ovulation in the middle of the cycle and before menstruation) has proven to be very effective.

Probiotics as a spa treatment for half a year.

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An oral probiotic for the vaginal flora

A good composition of microflora is not only important for the intestine, but also for a healthy vagina. An intact vaginal flora primarily contains lactobacilli, which ensure an acidic pH value in the vagina. Sick bacteria (e.g. *Escherichia coli* and *Gardnerella vaginalis*) and fungi (e.g. *Candida albicans*) cannot spread in this environment.

It takes very little to disturb the sensitive vaginal environment. Possible factors are e.g. Stress, antibiotic therapies, chemotherapy and also taking antibiotics and mechanical irritation.

The increase in the vaginal pH value in women after the change is due to a reduced formation of estrogen.

In pregnant women, the high hormone levels increase the risk of vaginal overgrowth. However, a healthy vaginal or vaginal flora is particularly important during pregnancy, as vaginal infections during pregnancy increase the risk of premature birth.

If there is no lactobacilli in the vaginal flora, the risk of infections in the urinary and genital organs such as Urinary tract infections, bacterial vaginosis (taste-the discharge) and fungal infection. Affected women complain of



symptoms such as painful burning sensation when urinating, unpleasant-smelling discharge, annoying itching or dryness in the genital area.

A suitable oral probiotic can help by returning the vaginal flora to its natural, slightly acidic balance. Such a preparation should meet the following criteria:

- It should contain strains of lactobacilli that occur naturally in the vaginal flora of healthy women.
- The lactobacilli contained should reduce the pH value in the vagina through the formation of lactic acid. Furthermore, it should be proven that the strains actually inhibit the growth of pathogenic bacteria and fungi.
- The lactobacilli must be stable to gastric acid and bile so that they can survive the gastrointestinal passage. It must be proven that they can settle in the vaginal area

and increase the content of lactobacilli there.

A clinical study has shown that a probiotic preparation with four suitable lactobacilli strains improves the vaginal flora and in particular can increase the number of lactobacilli.

An innovative and natural way of restoring or maintaining a healthy vaginal flora are probiotic preparations taken orally as capsules. Undesirable side effects of local application in the vagina, such as leaking suppositories are avoided.

Probiotic preparations are recommended for recurring infections in the urinary and genital organs such as in the case of bacterial vaginosis (smelly discharge), urinary tract infections, fungal infections, inflammatory cell smears or the use of medication that disturbs the vaginal flora (e.g. antibiotics, chemotherapy, birth control pills), and also for women after the change.

Maintaining or restoring a healthy vaginal flora is particularly important during pregnancy, as this can reduce the risk of premature birth.



Tips for proper intimate care

- Do not wash the intimate area with soap, shower gel or shampoo
- Use a bio-active cleaning and care product
- Clean your intimate area only from front to back after going to the toilet
- Change towels, washcloths, and underwear daily
- Do not use airtight panty liners
- Do not wear panties at night
- Change tampons and pads frequently
- Avoid tight-fitting, synthetic clothing
- Always take off wet bathing suit immediately
- Eat high in fiber, boost your immune system with B vitamins, and avoid too much sugar