

SHine SA contact details

East/West Primary Health Care Team

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Southern Primary Health Care Team

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Workforce Development & Resources

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SHineSACourses@health.sa.gov.au

Library & Resource Centre

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Sexual Healthline

Available 9 am – 1 pm, Monday – Friday
Tel:
Country callers (toll free):
Email:

1300 883 793

1800 188 171

sexualhealthhotline@health.sa.gov.au

Website

www.shinesa.org.au

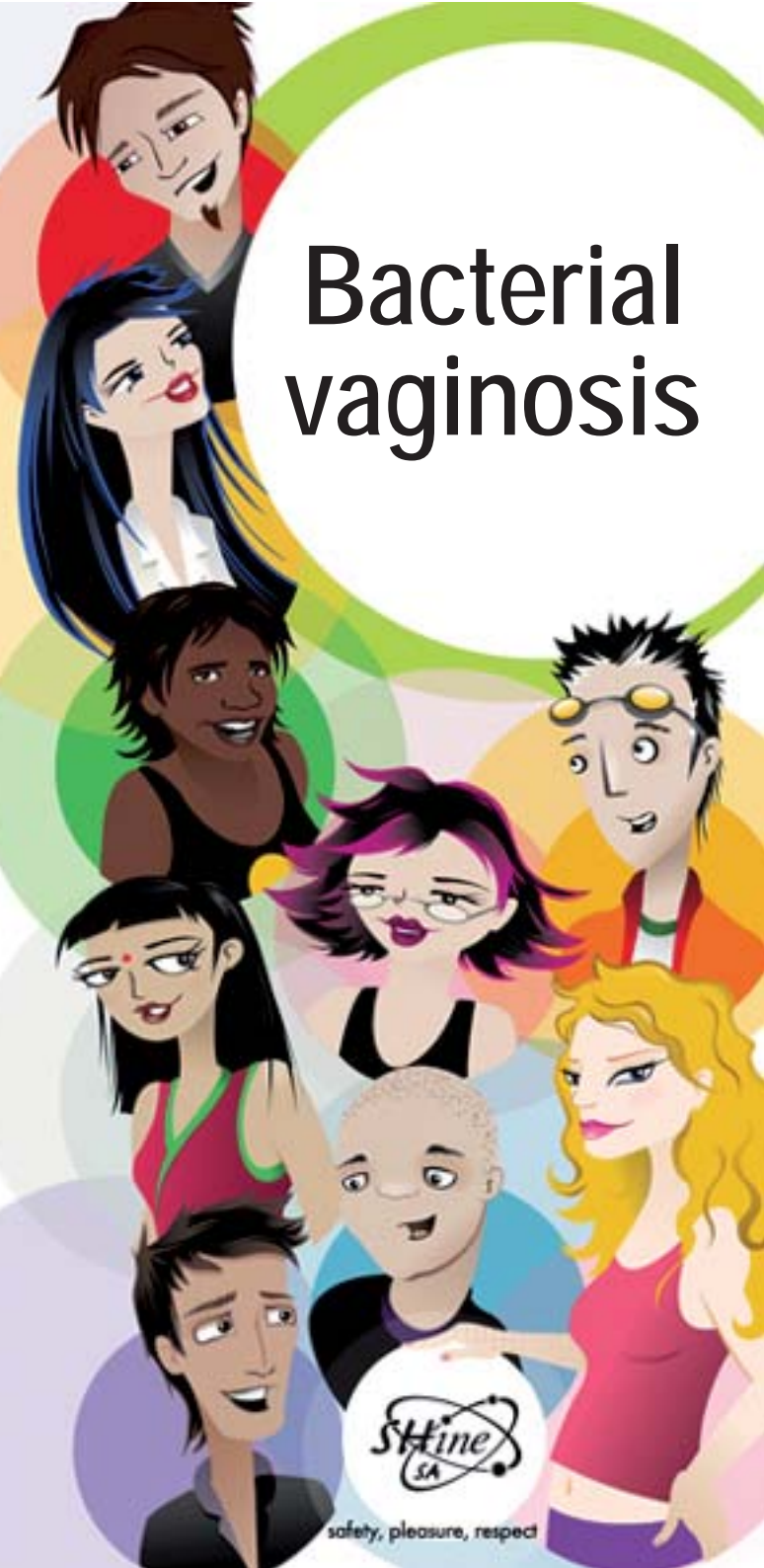
National Relay Service: www.relayservice.com.au
133 677 (TTY/Voice) 1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen)

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SHine SA pamphlets are regularly reviewed and updated.
To download the most recent version visit www.shinesa.org.au

Bacterial vaginosis



What is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a condition where there are too many of a certain type of bacteria in the vagina. Like most body surfaces, the vagina has bacteria which are normally present in small numbers. In certain circumstances these bacteria can overgrow causing bacterial vaginosis. This overgrowth can be treated or it may clear up by itself.

How common is bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis is very common. Often there are no symptoms and in these cases it's generally nothing to worry about.

How can I get bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis only affects women and is not something you can 'catch'. While it's more common in women who are sexually active, it can occur in women who are not sexually active. It is relatively common in women who have female sexual partners.

Bacterial vaginosis can occur when conditions in the vagina change and upset the normal balance of bacteria. It can be associated with new or increased sexual activity or with other changes such as menstruation or sexually transmitted infections.

It can also be associated with the use of vaginal deodorants, douches, bath oils or bath additives which can alter the normal balance of the vagina. Bacterial vaginosis is unlikely to be caused by taking the contraceptive Pill or antibiotics.

How do I know if I have bacterial vaginosis?

Normal vaginal discharge may change, becoming watery and pearly. Vaginal irritation may occur, and a strong fishy smell is common. These symptoms, especially the smell, may only be noticed after sex without a condom. Often there are no symptoms and bacterial vaginosis only shows up through a routine test.

How do I get tested for bacterial vaginosis?

A swab from the vagina is used to test for bacterial vaginosis.

When is treatment needed?

If there are no symptoms or the symptoms are not troublesome then it's OK to do nothing.

Treatment may be needed when:

- symptoms are a problem
- you are pregnant, because there is a small risk of the waters breaking early and premature birth
- you are undergoing any medical procedures which may allow bacteria into the uterus (e.g. IUD insertion)

How is bacterial vaginosis treated?

Bacterial vaginosis is usually treated with antibiotics. Metronidazole or tinidazole may be prescribed by your doctor (do not drink alcohol during this treatment).

Bacterial vaginosis can also be treated by:

- changing the acidity of the vagina using Aci-jel, which is effective because it alters the conditions for the vaginal bacteria – you can get this over the counter at a pharmacy

- clindamycin vaginal cream (Dalacin V) prescribed by your doctor

It's not necessary for your sex partner(s) to be treated.

Will I get bacterial vaginosis again?

You may get bacterial vaginosis again. Recurrences are common and can be treated, but this may only resolve the problem temporarily. Changing treatments may be useful.

How do I keep my vagina healthy?

Bacterial vaginosis is difficult to prevent, but there are some simple ways to maintain good vaginal health. You can:

- avoid using perfumed or medicated creams, oils, soaps, antiseptics or bath additives in the vagina
- wear cotton underwear and change daily
- change pads or tampons regularly
- avoid douching (washing inside) the vagina
- avoid sharing any sex toys that are inserted into the vagina

But most of all, if you think something is not right seek professional help.