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Bacterial vaginosis

The aim of this leaflet is to provide information on bacterial vaginosis and its treatment.

What is bacterial vaginosis (BV)?

Various bacteria live in the vagina, with the majority being lactic acid bacteria. When the amount of bacteria and their balance changes, and the amount of lactic acid bacteria decreases, the vaginal pH changes and bacterial vaginosis develops. Bacterial vaginosis does not spread sexually.

What Are the Causes of Bacterial Vaginosis?

Symptoms may not always be present, but are usually excreted with a bad smelling (fishy) vaginal discharge. The discharge is watery, whitish, or grey; it can be abundant. Burning sensations may also occur in the vagina. The smell may be stronger during menstruation and after sexual intercourse with a male partner.

Who can have bacterial vaginosis?

Bacterial vaginosis occurs in women who have been sexually active. The risk of getting sick increases if you have a new sexual partner or have more than one partner. This also applies if the partner is a woman. Insufficient or excessive intimate hygiene and vaginal flushes also increase the risk.

Bacterial vaginosis puts you at higher risk of contracting other sexually transmitted diseases.

Diagnosis

For diagnosis, a gynaecological examination is carried out, sometimes it is also necessary to take a vaginal sample.

Treatment

Bacterial vaginosis can sometimes resolve on its own. If there are symptoms, the disease needs treatment. You can get relief from pharmacy health products; ask your pharmacist for more information.

Different antibiotics are used for treatment, which are prescribed by a doctor. Both oral and topical (intravaginal) medicinal products are used, with treatment usually lasting between 5 and 7 days. A male partner does not require treatment, but a female partner does.

Bacterial vaginosis during pregnancy should be treated. Bacterial vaginosis definitely requires treatment prior to a surgical procedure.

Post-treatment period

No follow-up is necessary. Bacterial vaginosis can recur, even if you do not live a sexual life. To avoid re-emergence, use condoms, avoid vaginal washings and sharing sex toys.

If symptoms recur, a new course of antibacterial therapy is indicated.

If bacterial vaginosis recurs frequently, long-term treatment regimens are sometimes used.

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