

Patient Information

Women's Health Anaerobic/Bacterial Vaginosis



Anaerobic/Bacterial Vaginosis are common conditions caused by an overgrowth of bacteria in the vagina

What is the cause?

The exact cause is unknown; it is thought that if there is a change in the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina certain bacteria thrive and multiply much more than usual and as a result anaerobic/bacterial vaginosis occurs.

The condition is not thought to be a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STI); there is no need to treat sexual partners.

Symptoms

You may notice a change in your usual vaginal discharge. Typically a greyish fishy smelly discharge occurs particularly after intercourse.

However, around half women with anaerobic/bacterial vaginosis will not experience any symptoms.



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Anaerobic/bacterial vaginosis is more likely to occur if:

- You use scented soaps or perfumed bubble bath
- Put antiseptic liquids in the bath
- Push water into the vagina to clean it (douching)
- Smoke
- If you have recently changed your sexual partner (even in the same sex partnership)

Diagnosis

A vaginal swab is used to collect a sample of the discharge and is examined under the microscope.

Treatment

Antibiotics tablets are usually given. However, antibiotic gel which is applied directly into the vagina is sometimes used. Treatment is usually effective although it can reoccur.

What happens if it is left untreated?

In many cases the condition will resolve spontaneously without treatment.

However, some research suggests that untreated anaerobic/bacterial vaginosis increases the risk of conditions such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

If you are pregnant and the condition is left untreated in very rare cases it may lead to miscarriage, premature birth and infections of the womb following child birth

How can it be prevented?

- Avoid vaginal douching for example, pushing water into the vagina to clean it
- Avoid scented soaps and bubble bath
- Avoid over washing around the vagina

If you have any further questions please call the Early Pregnancy/ Emergency Gynaecology Unit, Beech Ward - Tel: 01793 695257



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From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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