

the short-term, but many people get a recurrence of BV within three months to a year of treatment. If BV does recur, another course of antibiotics is usually successful. Partners with a penis don't need to be treated.

Excessive washing will not help the odour and may cause irritation. Gently wash your genital area with plain water or a soap substitute.

You don't need to avoid sex if you have BV, unless you feel uncomfortable. However, using condoms and/or dams may reduce the chance of BV recurring.

### What will happen if it's not treated?

BV is common and most people with BV never have any complications. If you are pregnant however, BV can cause:

- miscarriage
- premature delivery
- low birth weight in babies
- infection of the uterus (womb) after childbirth.

If you have BV, the chance of infection of the uterus after certain operations is higher. You will be given antibiotics, even if you don't have any symptoms, to reduce this chance of infection.

## For more information contact:

### Sexual Health Quarters

70 Roe Street, Northbridge WA 6003  
Ph 08 9227 6177 | info@shq.org.au

### Sexual Health Helpline

Metropolitan callers 08 9227 6178  
Country callers 1800 198 205  
sexhelp@shq.org.au

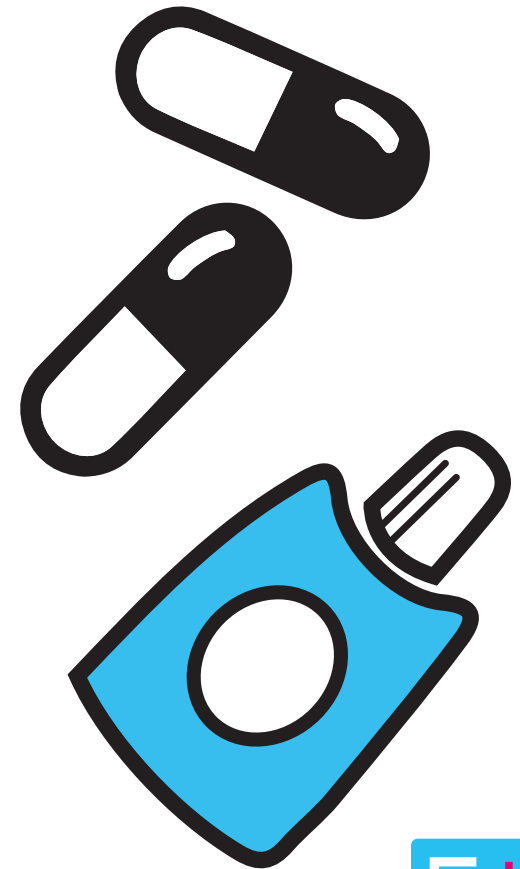
Your local contact is:

[shq.org.au](http://shq.org.au)



*SHQ is on Whadjuk land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country across Australia.*

# Thrush and Bacterial Vaginosis



## Thrush

### What is it?

Thrush is a common condition caused by candida, which is a yeast often found in the body without causing any problems. It is most likely to occur during pregnancy or when a person with a vagina is taking some types of medication, most commonly antibiotics. Those who are diabetic or those who have other illnesses may also have recurring problems with thrush.

While those with a penis may also have thrush, it is not considered to be a sexually transmissible infection.

### What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of vulvovaginal thrush can include:

- itchiness/burning/soreness around the vagina
- a thick white or yellow vaginal discharge
- discomfort during intercourse
- pain when urinating.

Thrush may be diagnosed by examination, with the presence of candida being confirmed by vaginal swabs. Candida may also be detected on a routine cervical screen.

### How is it treated/managed?

Thrush does not have to be treated if it is not bothering you. Some people find their symptoms can be relieved by sitting in a warm salty bath or

by using cold compresses.

If you are certain that thrush is the cause of your symptoms, antifungal vaginal creams and pessaries are available over the counter at pharmacies.

If you are finding that thrush is a frequent problem, it is advisable to visit a health professional who will examine you to confirm that thrush is the cause of your symptoms and may prescribe other treatments such as oral antifungal tablets. The health professional may take the opportunity to rule out the possibility of sexually transmissible infections, which can also cause irritation.

Putting yoghurt on an irritated vulva will not get rid of the infection.

Many people assume that any vaginal or vulval irritation is due to thrush. There are other conditions that can cause itchiness and soreness, such as eczema (dermatitis). If you have genital itching or soreness that persists after simple treatments, see a health professional.

## Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

### What is it?

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common cause of abnormal vaginal discharge.

The vagina contains many different bacteria that help keep it slightly acidic. If the normal balance of bacteria changes, BV can develop. The actual cause of BV remains unknown.

Those who are sexually active are more likely to get BV. It is unknown whether BV is transmitted through sex or whether it develops when sexual activity changes the normal balance of vaginal bacteria.

You may be more likely to get BV if you:

- douche or clean your vagina with soap or other products
- change sexual partners (especially if you do this frequently)
- have a sexual partner with a vagina
- receive oral sex
- don't use condoms.

### What are the symptoms?

Some people with BV have no symptoms. If symptoms are present, they can include:

- an unpleasant vaginal odour
- an abnormal, thin, greyish vaginal discharge
- itching/irritation around the vagina.

Your health professional will take a vaginal swab to test the discharge to confirm if you have BV.

### How is it treated/managed?

If you don't have any symptoms, you don't need any treatment. Treatment is recommended if you:

- are going to have surgery in the genital area (e.g. a termination of pregnancy or insertion of an intrauterine device)
- have symptoms
- are pregnant.

BV is usually treated with oral antibiotics or a vaginal antibiotic gel. Treatment usually works in