

## **BACTERIAL VAGINITIS**

### **What is it?**

Bacterial vaginitis, or vaginosis, is inflammation or infection of the vagina due to bacteria such as Gardnerella, E. coli, mycoplasma, streptococci or staphylococci. Bacterial vaginitis has become the most common vaginal infection in the United States. Most female genital tract infections are polymicrobial; they involve infection by more than one type of organism. These infections can be transmitted sexually and most often occur during the sexually active years. Bacteria are normally present in the vaginal flora, but when the pH or hormonal balance is changed, they can multiply and cause symptoms. Conditions that can cause this include hot weather and increased sweating, non-ventilating clothing, tight pants, wet clothing, general poor health, poor hygiene, vaginal douching and not adequately controlling diabetes mellitus. Bacterial vaginitis should not be ignored in pregnant women as it has been associated with preterm birth.

### **Signs and symptoms:**

- \* Vaginal discharge with bad odor sometimes described as "fishy".
- \* Itching and burning in genital area.
- \* Vaginal pain or discomfort, especially during intercourse.
- \* Vagina changes color from pink to red.
- \* Be aware that signs and symptoms are variable; not all of the above may be present or may be only slightly noticeable.

### **Treatment:**

- \* Medications will depend on type of organism causing the infection; they may be oral antibiotics or antifungals, or they may be vaginal creams or lotions.
- \* Use perfume and dye-free soaps; avoid bubble baths and feminine deodorant products. Take showers instead of baths.
- \* Keep genital area clean; your sexual partner should do the same.
- \* Wipe from front to back.
- \* Do not have sexual intercourse until your course of treatment is finished.
- \* Wear cotton underwear.
- \* Do not use douches.
- \* Lose any excess weight.
- \* During a menstrual period, change pads and tampons frequently.

Call the office if your symptoms do not improve within one week of treatment.