

Balance Activ Vaginal Gel for the management of bacterial vaginosis

Causes and symptoms

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common vaginal infection found in women of childbearing age.¹ Although many people have not heard of BV it is about twice as common as thrush, and experts estimate that at least 1 in 3 women will develop BV at some point in their life.^{2,3} The cause of BV is thought to be a change in vaginal pH resulting from changes in the usual vaginal fauna. Normally, the largest bacterial population are lactic-acid producing, which maintain the low vaginal pH and protect against infection. However, when there is a fall in the number of lactic acid-producing bacteria the pH level of the vagina rises, which allows the growth of other (unwanted) bacteria and development of BV. The main symptoms experienced by women include a thin, white-grey discharge, an embarrassing odour, vaginal discomfort and soreness. Although it is often mistaken for thrush it requires different, tailored treatment. Treatment of BV with antibiotics has been associated with recurrence rates as high as 72%.⁴

The main reasons identified that can lead to a woman developing BV include:

- Having sex without a condom (because the pH of semen is quite alkaline)
- Using perfumed intimate products
- Have a prolonged menstruation
- Frequent douching (because this washes out the normal harmless bacteria)
- Hormone imbalances
- Use of intrauterine devices (because a 'foreign body' can facilitate the development of unwanted bacteria)
- Taking antibiotic therapy.

Complications of having BV

Although it is considered unusual for BV to cause complications in otherwise healthy, non-pregnant women, recent research has shown that the presence of BV has been implicated in pelvic inflammatory disease, tubal infertility and has been shown to increase the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV⁵ as well as other sexually transmitted infections.

BV can cause significant complications in pregnant women such as:

- Late miscarriage
- Preterm birth
- Premature rupture of membranes (waters breaking early)
- Low birth weight.

How does Balance Activ Vaginal Gel work?

Balance Activ Vaginal Gel contains both lactic acid, which immediately restores and maintains the natural pH level of the vagina, and glycogen to encourage the growth of the normal bacteria. It has been shown by some experts working in the field to neutralise the embarrassing odour and effectively relieves abnormal discharge and discomfort. It has also been shown to be safe to use during menstruation, menopause and when using antibiotics.

The importance of education cannot be overstated

A recent survey of more than 1000 women in the UK found:⁶

- More than half of women (57%) did not know what BV is.
- 66% of UK women admitted they don't know the difference between thrush and BV, and a further 22% were not sure.

For more information please visit www.balanceactiv.com.

To order please call Inverness Medical on 0161 419 6307 or email support@invmeduk.com.

References in brief

1. Bacterial Vaginosis available from www.patient.co.uk; 2. The Family Planning Association. Information about BV from www.fpa.org.uk; 3. Society of Sexual Health Advisors. Information about BV from www.ssha.info; 4. Marrazzo JM. Elusive aetiology of bacterial vaginosis. Do lesbians have a clue? *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 2007; **83**: 424–5. Available at <http://sti.bmj.com/cgi/content/extract/83/6/424>; 5. Joesoef M, Schmid G. Bacterial Vaginosis. *Clinical Evidence* 2006; **15**: 1–2.; 6. Regain Your Balance survey run through www.Tickbox.net in June 2008.

