

## What Stinks?

Okay now. If you are a man reading this—I Caught Ya! This video is FOR LADIES ONLY! So please be nice and stop reading. If you are a woman reading this, then keep reading, my sista!

As a board certified Gynecologist and woman myself, I know all about the female complaint of having a vaginal discharge that stinks. Haunting thoughts of whether or not the bathroom smells fresh when you see someone walk in immediately behind you, embarrassing feelings regarding freshness during intercourse, stinky, sticky underwear, and personal doubts regarding your hygiene—are the reality of many women. Trust me, I not only understand, but if you keep reading, I believe I can help.

So what causes stinky vaginal discharge? Most commonly, it is a bacterial infection of the vagina called Bacterial Vaginosis. NO! It is not a sexually transmitted disease. *That's usually the first thing my patients want to know.* It can be however, sexually associated. Meaning your risk of getting this type of infection is directly related to the act of sex itself. Some of you may be saying—*Whoa! Wait! How is that any different than being sexually transmitted?* I'll explain. Sexually transmitted, means that the organism itself (bacteria or virus) is passed—or *transmitted*—from one person to another during sex. Sexually associated simply means that the infection can develop as a result of having sex, but it is not transferred during sex.

The pH balance of the vagina is acidic compared to the ejaculate of the male, which has a more basic pH balance. During sex, the introduction of semen into the vaginal canal can cause the environment to become more basic. When this happens, the balance between good and bad bacteria in the vagina is disrupted. As a result, organisms that normally cannot grow in the vagina (due to its acidic nature) now begin to colonize or grow. BV is commonly the overgrowth of a bacteria called *Gardenerella*.

Signs and symptoms of BV may include: a white/gray vaginal discharge that smells fishy, vaginal irritation (itching or burning) in or outside the vaginal opening, and burning when you urinate. Some women are asymptomatic. BV is easy to treat and usually only requires an antibiotic orally or vaginally. Certain behaviors to avoid that can increase your risk for this particular infection include: smoking, douching —*this is such a no-no*, and multiple sex partners or frequent sexual encounters.

Now, as I mentioned in the beginning, BV is the most common cause of a stinky discharge. However, it is not the only cause of it. There are a few other things that can cause discharge and odor that I want to discuss. Believe it or not, what you eat can often affect vaginal scent and discharge. One of the biggest culprits I've noticed over the last few years of practicing is—dairy! *Yes, I said dairy.* Research has shown that a symptom of having a dairy allergy can be copious vaginal discharge. I've noticed that in many of my patient's that have negative BV cultures, when I tell them to avoid dairy for 2-4 weeks, they return to tell me that the discharge and the smell has disappeared. You may also notice that two weeks before the onset of your period, you may have a weird vaginal odor—*doesn't necessarily stink, but it doesn't smell fresh either.* Vitamin supplements and certain kinds of probiotics can not only cause vaginal odor, but can also cause your urine to smell bad. Forgetting to remove a tampon, can be another reason. *Believe it or not, it happens! Don't be shame—go ahead into your gynecologist's office and get it removed. That's what we're here for.* Finally, Trichomoniasis (which is a sexually transmitted disease), cancer (can be of the cervix or the vagina), and poor hygiene are other culprits.

What Stinks! The next time you find yourself asking this question regarding your own body, take a moment to remember some of these reasons behind vaginal odor or malodorous vaginal discharge. Additionally, call and make an appointment with your gynecologist to be examined. If you enjoyed this post, I would love if you'd help it spread by emailing it to a friend or family member, or sharing it on Twitter or Facebook. Thank you! –Raw Medicine, Dr. Chevelta, What Stinks?