

Involving partners in the treatment of bacterial vaginosis (BV): Medication Instructions

Combination oral and topical antibiotic instructions for men to improve BV cure

Treating males with a combination of oral and topical antibiotics has been shown to greatly improve cure of bacterial vaginosis (BV) for their female partner, when antibiotics are given to women at the same time. It is important that both partners try to take their antibiotics over the same 7 day period where possible and avoid unprotected sex during the treatment period.

Treatment for men involves taking an oral antibiotic called metronidazole twice a day for 7 days AND applying a cream to the skin of the penis twice a day for 7 days. We use two types of antibiotics in men as the oral antibiotic helps to clear the BV-bacteria from inside the urethra (the tube you pee through), and the topical cream helps to clear the BV-bacteria from the skin of the penis. These antibiotics have been used for many years to treat women with BV, and for other bacterial infections, and are safe and effective in men and women.

The cream is very well tolerated in men and should not cause irritation or redness. Metronidazole can occasionally cause a mild headache, nausea or metallic taste in some people. It is important not to consume alcohol for the week you are taking metronidazole as it can interact and make you vomit or flush. If you have any symptoms that you are concerned about while you are taking the antibiotics, please speak to your doctor. It is important that **no doses of either the oral or topical antibiotic are missed over the 7 days.** If you forget a dose, then skip this dose and continue taking the antibiotics twice a day until they are finished.

Oral metronidazole: Take one tablet in the morning and one at night with food for 7 days

Topical 2% clindamycin cream: This cream is commercially packaged with instructions for vaginal use as it is most commonly used to treat BV in women. If the pharmacist has not already done so, please take the tube of cream out of the box, discard the applicators, and then follow the instructions below for penile application.

Detailed Instructions for applying 2% clindamycin cream to the penile skin.

- Firstly, the cream needs to be applied in the morning and at night (before you go to sleep).
- Squeeze a line of cream from the fingertip of your index finger to the first crease, as shown in this picture. (photo source: <https://dermnetnz.org/topics/fingertip-unit/>)
- If you have a foreskin pull it back before applying the cream. Rub the cream gently over the skin of the head of the penis, covering the whole head from the tip of the penis to the groove, just below the head.
- Squeeze a second line of cream from the fingertip of your index finger to the first crease.
- Rub this second dose of cream down the shaft of the penis, starting at the groove under the head, and moving down the shaft to the base of the penis. Make sure you cover the front and the back of the shaft. Make sure all of the cream is gently rubbed into the skin. You may not need the full two finger tips of cream, so discard the remainder if you have excess.
- Repeat this process twice daily for 7 days.
- Do not apply before a shower or it will be washed off. If you shower in the morning apply the cream immediately after showering.
- Please avoid any sexual contact during the treatment period to avoid bacteria being exchanged between partners and the BV coming back. If you do have penile-vaginal sex, please ensure you use a condom. Clindamycin cream may potentially weaken latex if the cream has just been applied.

