

# Women's Health **UPDATE**

## Knowing The Symptoms Of A Common Feminine Infection

(NAPSA)—Becoming aware of the signs and symptoms of a common infection may be an important part of getting women the healthcare they need.

A recent survey showed that more than 90 percent of women mistakenly believe that yeast infections, not bacterial vaginosis (BV), are the most common vaginal infections, perpetuating self-diagnosis and mistreatment.

“Learning the facts about vaginal health is a ‘must’ for every woman,” said Deborah Norville, TV journalist and host of *Inside Edition*, who announced the survey results at a recent news conference.

Bacterial vaginosis is a common condition that occurs when harmful bacteria overgrow in the vagina. Although BV affects millions of women in the U.S. each year, less than half of the 300 women polled were able to identify any symptoms associated with BV and nearly one-quarter had never heard of BV.

“The lack of BV awareness among women is particularly troublesome because BV can cause more than temporary discomfort and embarrassment—it can have serious consequences,” said David Eschenbach, M.D., professor, researcher and attending physician of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Washington in Seattle. “If left untreated, BV can lead to pregnancy complications, inflammation in the pelvic region—a condition that can lead to infertility—infections after gynecologic surgery and an increased risk of acquiring HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.”

According to the survey, sponsored by the 3M National Vaginitis Association, 48 percent of the women could identify itching and discharge as symptoms of yeast infection, but



**Over-the-counter remedies are not a suitable treatment for a common yet serious infection.**

admitted they don't know the symptoms of BV at all. More than 50 percent felt it was acceptable to purchase over-the-counter medications to treat BV. Symptoms of BV may include a strong unpleasant odor, increased vaginal discharge and possibly itching.

It is essential that women see a health care professional for an accurate diagnosis, because over-the-counter products for yeast are not effective against BV. The only effective treatments for BV require a doctor's prescription.

For more information, consumers can obtain a free educational brochure, *Straight talk about vaginal health with Deborah Norville*, by calling 1-800-4BV-NEWS (1-800-428-6397). Or write to the 3M National Vaginitis Association at P.O. Box 2038, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156 or visit [www.vaginalinfections.com](http://www.vaginalinfections.com).