Bacterial Vaginosis May Be Risk Factor for HSV-2

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CHICAGO — Women with bacterial vaginosis might face a higher risk of acquiring herpes simplex type 2 infections, said Dr. Emilia Koumans, a public health official with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Her cross-sectional study couldn't assess the temporal relationship between the two infections, but it found that the prevalence of herpes simplex type 2 (HSV-2) infections was significantly higher in women with bacterial vaginosis (BV) than in those without BV, she reported at a meeting on STD prevention sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Koumans analyzed data for all sexually active women aged 20-49 years who were included in the 2001-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. The women completed a detailed health survey and provided self-collected vaginal swabs for the diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections. They also provided serum samples for HSV-2 serotyping.

Overall BV and HSV-2 prevalence varied significantly by age, race, and number of lifetime sexual partners. For those aged 20-29 years, prevalence of BV was 33% and HSV-2, 17%. For those aged 30-39, prevalence for both was 27%. For those aged 40-49, prevalence of BV was 30% and HSV-2, 34%.

HSV-2/BV coinfections were significantly more common in blacks (66%) than in whites or Mexican Americans (29% and 19%, respectively). Coinfections were also more common in those reporting 10 or more lifetime sexual partners (58% vs. 40% for those with 5-9 partners and 20% for those with 1-4 partners).

HSV-2 was significantly more common in those with BV than in those without BV (37% vs. 23%). The association was strong after controlling for age, race, and number of lifetime sexual partners. Dr. Koumans reported no financial disclosures. ■