



Delivering a Healthy WA

Trichomoniasis

What is Trichomoniasis?

Trichomoniasis is a genital infection caused by a tiny parasite called *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The organism is spread through unprotected vaginal sex. Women can pass it on to men or women during sex, but men only seem to catch it from women.

It is one of the most common Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Trichomonas vaginalis can also live for a few hours on items such as damp towels (but not toilet seats), so there may be a possibility of it spreading this way. For this reason don't share towels, washcloths and similar items.

If you have trichomoniasis, you could also have other STIs, so it is important to be tested for other infections at the same time. Research is showing that if you have trichomoniasis it can significantly increase your risk of getting HIV, so it is important to seek testing and treatment early.

Trichomoniasis can also cause a baby to be born early or underweight. Rarely, it can be passed on from mother to baby during birth.

Trichomoniasis may also increase the risk of both men and women becoming infertile, and possibly the risk of getting cervical cancer in women.

Symptoms

People with trichomoniasis often have no symptoms. For those who do, symptoms may appear within four to 20 days after the person is infected. The symptoms are different for men and women.

Women

Symptoms may include:

- red, sore or itchy vulva (genital area) and vagina, which can make walking or sitting difficult
- an increased amount of vaginal discharge which is thin and foamy, light grey to a yellowish-green in colour, and may have an unpleasant 'fishy' odour
- burning or pain when passing urine or during sex.

These can be worse during your period.

Men

Symptoms in men are rare. Occasionally, a man may notice:

- slight discharge from the urethra
- burning or pain when passing urine or during sex.



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Checking it out

Most doctors do not normally test for trichomoniasis, so you may need to ask for the test to be done.

Women

The doctor will take a sample of vaginal discharge with a swab (a special cotton bud). Trichomoniasis is sometimes detected with your regular Pap smear, but if you think you have it, you still need to tell your doctor.

Men

In most cases, the doctor will take a swab of from the tip of the penis.

Prevention and Treatment

Trichomoniasis is treated with antibiotics, either as a single dose or as smaller doses taken over 5 days. You should take these with food. Avoid alcohol during the treatment and for 3 days afterwards as it can affect the antibiotics and make you vomit. **Avoid sex during this time.**

You must tell your doctor if you are, or think you might be pregnant. Women are usually treated with a vaginal cream applied for six days. It is important that pregnant women seek treatment early, as trichomoniasis can lead to premature (early) labour.

It is important that any sexual partners are contacted, treated to prevent reinfection and checked for other STIs. You can do this yourself or ask your doctor to contact your partners. Your name will not be mentioned.

You can get trichomoniasis more than once.

Avoid having many sexual partners.

Having fewer sexual partners means you lower the risk of having sex with someone who has an infection.

Always use condoms when having sex with new partners. Condoms are the best way of protecting both of you until you know your partner does not have an STI.

You and your new partner should both have an STI check-up with your doctor when you begin a new sexual relationship.

Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program

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