



Trichomoniasis

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

What is trichomoniasis?

Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that affects both women and men, although symptoms are more common in women. It is caused by the single-celled protozoan parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The vagina is the most common site of infection in women, and the urethra is the most common site of infection in men.

How do people get it?

Trichomoniasis is an STI that is spread through penis-vagina intercourse or vulva-vulva contact with an infected partner. Men usually do not transmit the infection to other men.

What are signs and symptoms?

Many women with trichomoniasis have symptoms. In these women, it causes a frothy, yellow-green vaginal discharge with a strong odor. The infection may also cause discomfort during intercourse and urination, irritation and itching of the female genital area, and in rare cases, lower abdominal pain can also occur. Symptoms usually appear within 5 to 28 days of exposure in women. In women, the infection may result in an asymptomatic carrier state.

Most men with trichomoniasis do not have symptoms. Men with symptoms may have irritation inside the penis, mild discharge or slight burning after urination or ejaculation. The infection in men is usually transient and lasts less than 10 days.

Are there medical complications?

Trichomoniasis in pregnant women is associated with premature rupture of the membranes and preterm delivery. The genital inflammation caused by trichomoniasis may also increase a woman's risk of acquiring HIV infection if she is exposed to HIV.

How is it diagnosed?

To diagnose trichomoniasis, a medical provider performs a physical exam and laboratory test. In women, a pelvic exam can reveal small red ulcerations on the vaginal wall or cervix. A sample of vaginal fluid or urethral fluid is examined under the microscope to look for the disease-causing parasite. In difficult to treat cases, other laboratory testing is available. The parasite is harder to detect in men than in women. Testing for men is not widely available. Male partners of infected women should be treated with out testing.

Trichomonas vaginalis has not been found to infect oral sites and rectal prevalence is low. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not recommend oral or rectal testing.

How is it treated?

Trichomoniasis can be successfully treated with oral medications such as metronidazole and tinadazole. No alcohol should be consumed during treatment or for several days after treatment. Discuss this with your provider. Both sexual partners should be treated at the same time. People being treated for trichomoniasis should avoid sex until treatment is completed and they are free of symptoms.

How can it be prevented?

It can be prevented by using condoms correctly with every sexual encounter.

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