

Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a parasite. The parasite is spread most often through vaginal, oral, or anal sex. It is one of the most common STIs in the United States and affects more women than men. It is easily treated with antibiotics, but many women do not have symptoms. If left untreated, trichomoniasis can raise your risk of getting HIV.

Q: How do you get trichomoniasis?

A: Trichomoniasis is spread through:

- Vaginal, oral, or anal sex. Trichomoniasis can be spread even if there are no symptoms. This means you can get trichomoniasis from someone who has no signs or symptoms.
- Genital touching. A man does not need to ejaculate (come) for trichomoniasis to spread. Trichomoniasis can also be passed between women who have sex with women.

Q: What are the signs and symptoms of trichomoniasis?

A: Most infected women have no signs or symptoms. If you do get signs or symptoms, they might appear five to 28 days after exposure and can include:

- Irritation and itching in the genital area
- Thin or frothy discharge (clear, white, yellowish, or greenish) with an unusual foul odor
- Discomfort during sex and when urinating
- Lower abdominal pain (this is rare)

If you think you may have trichomoniasis, you and your sex partner(s) need to see a doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

Q: What should I do if I have trichomoniasis?

A: Trichomoniasis is easy to treat. But you need to be tested and treated as soon as possible.

If you have trichomoniasis:

- **See a doctor or nurse as soon as possible.** Antibiotics will treat trichomoniasis.
- **Take all of your medicine.** Even if symptoms go away, you need to finish *all* of the antibiotics.
- **Tell your sex partner(s)** so they can be tested and treated.
- **Avoid sexual contact until you and your partner(s) have been treated and cured.** Even after you finish your antibiotics, you can get trichomoniasis again if you have sex with someone who has trichomoniasis.
- **See your doctor or nurse again if you have symptoms that don't go away** within a few days after finishing the antibiotics.

Q: How can I prevent trichomoniasis?

A: The best way to prevent trichomoniasis or any STI is to not have vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

If you do have sex, lower your risk of getting an STI with the following steps:

- **Use condoms.** Condoms are the best way to prevent STIs when you have sex. Because a man does not need to ejaculate (come) to give or get trichomoniasis, make sure to put the condom on before the penis touches the vagina, mouth, or anus. Other methods of birth control, like birth control pills, shots, implants, or diaphragms, will not protect you from STIs.

- **Get tested.** Be sure you and your partner are tested for STIs. Talk to each other about the test results before you have sex.
- **Be monogamous.** Having sex with just one partner can lower your risk for STIs. After being tested for STIs, be faithful to each other. That means that you have sex only with each other and no one else.
- **Limit your number of sex partners.** Your risk of getting STIs goes up with the number of partners you have.
- **Do not douche.** Douching removes some of the normal bacteria in the vagina that protects you from infection. This may increase your risk of getting STIs.
- **Do not abuse alcohol or drugs.** Drinking too much alcohol or using drugs increases risky behavior and may put you at risk of sexual assault and possible exposure to STIs.

The steps work best when used together. No single step can protect you from every single type of STI.

For more information...

For more information about trichomoniasis, call the OWH Helpline at 800-994-9662 or contact the following organizations:

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP), CDC, HHS

Phone Number: 800-232-4636 • www.cdc.gov/nchhstp

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), NIH, HHS

Phone Number: 866-284-4107 • www.niaid.nih.gov

American Sexual Health Association

Phone Number: 800-227-8922 • www.ashastd.org

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Phone Number: 800-230-7526 • www.plannedparenthood.org

This fact sheet was reviewed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) staff.

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