

TRICHOMONIASIS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Trichomoniasis is an infection of the vagina caused by a parasite that lives in the lower genitourinary tract. *Trichomonas vaginalis* (TV) or 'trich' is caused by a tiny parasite. It is very contagious between sexual partners. The disorder involves the vagina, urethra and bladder in women. In men, it affects the prostate gland and urethra.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- The severity of discomfort varies greatly from woman to woman and from time to time in the same woman. Infected men may have no symptoms.
- Foul-smelling, frothy vaginal discharge that is most noticeable several days after a menstrual period.
- Vaginal itching and pain.
- Redness of the vaginal lips (labia) and vagina.
- Painful urination, if urine touches inflamed tissue.

CAUSES

Infection from a tiny parasite, *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The parasite passes from person to person during sexual intercourse. It may live in its host for years without producing symptoms. Then, perhaps from altered resistance, it will suddenly multiply rapidly and cause distressing symptoms. Since it thrives in both the male and female, both sexual partners must receive treatment.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Multiple sexual partners.
- On very rare occasions, TV can be spread by sharing moist towels, washcloths or even from Jacuzzis and hot baths.

PREVENTIVE MEASURE

- Use latex (rubber) condoms during sexual intercourse.
- Limit your sexual partners. The more sex partners you have, the greater your risk of encountering someone who has this or other STDs.
- If you are infected, your sexual partner(s) should be treated. This will prevent you from getting reinfected.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Usually curable with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Secondary bacterial infections.
- Babies born to infected mothers may contract infection during delivery. Infants may develop fever; girls may develop vaginal discharge.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory studies of vaginal discharge, Pap smear and pelvic examination.
- Both sexual partners require simultaneous treatment.
- Don't douche unless prescribed for you.
- Wear cotton underpants or pantyhose with a cotton crotch.
- Take showers instead of tub baths.
- If urinating causes burning: Urinate through a tubular device, such as a toilet-paper roll or plastic cup with the bottom cut out or pour a cup of warm water over the genital area while you urinate.
- Don't sit around in wet clothing, especially in a wet bathing suit.
- For more information, check the library or the internet.

MEDICATION

Metronidazole (Flagyl) is usually prescribed for you and your sexual partner or partners. Follow directions carefully. Don't drink alcohol or use vinegar when you take metronidazole. Alcohol or vinegar and metronidazole interact to cause a violent reaction with nausea, vomiting, sweating, weakness and other symptoms.

ACTIVITY

Avoid overexertion, heat and excessive sweating. Delay sexual relations until treatment is completed and your sexual partner, if infected, has been treated. Allow about 10 days for recovery.

DIET

No special diet instructions except those involving alcohol and vinegar (see Medication).



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of trichomonal vaginitis.
- Symptoms persist longer than 1 week or worsen, despite treatment.
- Unusual vaginal bleeding or swelling develops.
- After treatment, symptoms recur.