



<http://www.womenshealth.gov>

1-800-994-9662

TDD: 1-888-220-5446

# Trichomoniasis

**Q: What is trichomoniasis?**

**A:** Trichomoniasis (TRIK-uh-muh-NEYE-uh-suhss) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a parasite. It is sometimes called “trich.” Trichomoniasis is the most common curable STI found in young, sexually active women.

**Q: How do women get trichomoniasis?**

**A:** The parasite is spread through sexual contact. Women can get it by having penis-to-vagina intercourse with an infected man or vulva-to-vulva contact with an infected woman. Men usually get it only from infected women.

**Q: What are the symptoms of trichomoniasis?**

**A:** Some women have no symptoms. Symptoms usually appear 5 to 28 days after exposure and can include:

- Yellow-green (sometimes frothy) vaginal discharge with a foul odor
- Discomfort during sex and when passing urine
- Irritation and itching in the genital area
- Lower abdominal pain in rare cases

If you have any symptoms, stop having sex and contact your doctor right away.

**Q: Is there a test for trichomoniasis?**

**A:** To tell if you have trichomoniasis, your doctor will do a pelvic exam and lab

test. During the pelvic exam, your doctor may be able to see small red sores inside the vagina or on the cervix. Your doctor will also take a fluid sample from the vagina to look for the parasite under a microscope or to send to a lab. Other tests, like a vaginal culture or DNA test can also be used for testing.

If you have trichomoniasis, ask your doctor if you should be tested for other STIs too.

**Q: How is trichomoniasis treated?**

**A:** Trichomoniasis usually can be cured with these antibiotics:

- Metronidazole (me-truh-NYD-uh-zohl), or
- Tinidazole (teye-NID-uh-zohl)

These drugs usually are given by mouth in a single dose. If you are allergic to the medicines normally used, your doctor might suggest topical medicines, which are medicines applied to the skin. But the topical medicines don't work as well and may not cure you. They might, however, ease the symptoms.

People being treated for trichomoniasis should not have sex until they and their sex partners complete treatment and have no symptoms.

**Q: What happens if I don't get treated?**

**A:** If you don't get treated, the infection stays in your body. Even without symptoms, it can be passed to others. Having trichomoniasis also can increase a woman's risk of getting HIV if she is exposed to the virus.



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### Trichomoniasis and HIV

Having trichomoniasis increases a woman's risk of getting HIV if she is exposed to the virus. Having trichomoniasis may increase the chance that an HIV-infected woman passes HIV to her sex partner(s).

**Q: Should I tell my partner if I have trichomoniasis?**

**A:** Yes — your partner could have the infection too. You and your partner should be treated at the same time to keep from infecting each other again. Be sure to tell all of your recent sex partners also, so they can get tested and treated.

**Q: Does trichomoniasis cause problems during pregnancy?**

**A:** Pregnant women with trichomoniasis may have babies who are born early or at a low birth weight. Babies born early or too small can have health problems. Metronidazole can be used during pregnancy. But some doctors feel that it's best to not use metronidazole during the first 3 months, when the baby's organs are forming. Talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks of treatment during pregnancy. Keep in mind that without treatment, you can give the infection to others.

**Q: How can I keep from getting trichomoniasis?**

**A:** You can take steps to lower your risk of getting trichomoniasis and other STIs. The following steps work best when used together:

- **Don't have sex.** The surest way to lower risk of trichomoniasis or any STI is to practice abstinence, which means not having vaginal, oral, or anal sex. Keep in mind that trichomoniasis can be spread through vulva-to-vulva contact.
- **Be faithful.** Having sex with one uninfected partner who only has sex with you will keep you safe from trichomoniasis and other STIs. Both you and your partner must be faithful all the time to avoid exposure. This means that you only have sex with each other and no one else. The fewer sex partners you have, the lower your risk of being exposed to an STI.
- **Use condoms correctly and every time you have sex.** Use condoms for all types of sexual contact, even if penetration does not occur. Use a condom from the very beginning to the very end of each sex act, and with every partner. For vaginal sex, use a latex male condom or a female polyurethane condom. For anal sex, use a latex male condom. For oral sex, use a dental dam.
- **Know that some birth control methods — and other methods — don't protect against STIs.** Birth control methods including the pill, shots, implants, IUD, diaphragm, and spermicides, don't protect against STIs. If you use one of these methods, make sure to also use a condom with every sex act. Washing genitals, passing urine, and douching after sex will not keep you from getting an STI.



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- **Talk with your sex partner(s) about using condoms before having sex.** Set the ground rules so you can avoid misunderstandings in a moment of passion. Be clear that you will not have any type of sex, any time, without using a condom. Remember, it's your body!
- **Get tested for STIs.** If either you or your partner has had other sexual partners in the past, get tested for STIs before becoming sexually active.
- **Have regular checkups and pelvic exams even if you're healthy.** During the checkup, your doctor will ask you a lot of questions about your lifestyle, including your sex life. Answering honestly is the only way your doctor is sure to give you the care you need. ■

### *For more information*

For more information on trichomoniasis, contact [womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) at 1-800-994-9662 or the following organizations.

#### **CDC Info, HHS**

Phone number: (800) CDC-INFO or (800) 232-4636

#### **CDC National Prevention Information Network (NPIN), CDC, HHS**

Phone number: (800) 458-5231  
Internet address: <http://www.cdcnpin.org>

#### **Division of STD Prevention, NCHHSTP, CDC, HHS**

Internet address: <http://www.cdc.gov/std>

#### **National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, NIH, HHS**

Phone number: (866) 284-4107  
Internet address: <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/publications/stds.htm>

#### **American Social Health Association**

Phone number: (800) 227-8922  
Internet address: <http://www.ashastd.org>

#### **Planned Parenthood Federation of America**

Phone number: (800) 230-7526  
Internet address: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org>

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