



Trichomonas

What is trichomonas infection?

Trichomonas is a contagious disease caused by protozoa. Trichomonas is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

How is trichomonas spread?

Trichomonas is spread through sexual activity. Infection is more common in women who have had multiple sexual partners. A common myth is that a toilet seat can spread infection. This is not likely, since the parasite cannot live long in the environment or on objects.

What are the signs and symptoms of infection?

Women: Signs and symptoms of infection range from having no symptoms (asymptomatic) to having several symptoms. These might include a foul smelling or frothy green discharge from the vagina, vaginal itching, or redness. Also, there may be pain during sexual intercourse, lower abdominal discomfort, or the urge to urinate when the bladder is empty.

Men: Most men with this infection do not have symptoms. However, they may have discharge from the urethra (opening of the penis). They could also have the urge to urinate when the bladder is empty, or a burning sensation with urination.

How long after infection do symptoms occur?

Most women with symptoms develop them within 6 months of being infected.

How is infection diagnosed?

Women: Your healthcare provider will perform a pelvic exam to collect vaginal samples for examination. Diagnosis is most commonly made by viewing the protozoa under a microscope. It can also be sometimes diagnosed with a Pap smear.

Men: Diagnosis is made by collecting specimens from the urethra (opening of the penis).

I have trichomonas and am pregnant. Can I spread the infection to my baby?

Yes, but this is rare. Babies born to infected mothers may get the infection during delivery. Infants may develop fever, and females may develop vaginal discharge. Children should be treated if diagnosed. See your healthcare provider about treatment for trichomonas during pregnancy.

How can a child get trichomonas?

Infants: If an infant is infected, it is possible that the mother spread the infection during delivery. The mother should be checked for infection.

Young children: Because trichomonas is an STD, an infection in a young child may mean the child has been sexually abused. If sexual abuse is suspected, testing for other STDs is needed.

Teenagers: An infection in a teenager may indicate sexual activity or sexual abuse. Testing for other STDs is needed.

What is the treatment?

- Your healthcare provider will prescribe an antibiotic for you. Flagyl (Metronidazole) is a type that is commonly used. Your sexual partner(s) also needs treatment. If all current sexual partners are not treated, it is possible to become re-infected.
- Do not have sex during the time you are taking your medicine and for one week after you have finished your medicine.
- Infants and children who are infected should be treated.
- You cannot drink any alcohol while taking the medicine, because it can cause you to have a severe headache and vomiting.

- Taking Flagyl during pregnancy is safe. If the disease is not treated during pregnancy, you have a greater risk for premature labor.

Can infection be prevented?

Yes. Follow these guidelines:

- Abstain from unprotected sexual intercourse.
- Use a latex condom properly, every time you have sexual intercourse, with every partner.
- Limit your sexual partners. The more sex partners you have, the greater your risk of meeting someone who has this or other STDs.
- If you are infected, your sexual partner(s) should be treated. This will prevent you from getting re-infected.

Once I am infected, am I immune?

No. You can get infected again.

What should I do if I think I have trichomonas?

See your healthcare provider to obtain a test and treatment for the infection.

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