



# Trichomoniasis

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## What is trichomoniasis?

Trichomoniasis is an infection caused by a parasite called *Trichomonas vaginalis*. Both men and women can get trichomoniasis.

## How is trichomoniasis spread?

Trichomoniasis is almost always spread through contact with an infected person during vaginal sex.

## What are the symptoms of trichomoniasis?

Most people with trichomoniasis do not have symptoms. If symptoms ARE experienced, *a woman* may experience an abnormal gray or yellow-green vaginal discharge (drip), and itching or irritation in and around the vagina. *A man* may experience a clear discharge from the tip of the penis. These symptoms usually occur about a week after infection, although they may occur in as few as 4 days or as many as 20 days.

If you think you've been exposed to trichomoniasis, your provider can do tests to see if you're infected, whether you have symptoms or not. (*Giving your doctor a chance to find infections that don't have symptoms is one reason it's so important to get regular check-ups, even when you're not feeling sick!*)

## How will I know if I have trichomoniasis?

Your doctor or other health-care provider will collect a sample of fluid from the vagina or the penis with a small swab and have it tested at a laboratory. Some providers can test for trichomoniasis using a urine sample.

## How is trichomoniasis treated?

Prescription medication can cure trichomoniasis. A person can become re-infected after treatment if exposed again.

## What happens if trichomoniasis is left untreated?

Like other STDs, if left untreated, trichomoniasis can increase a person's chance of getting or spreading HIV. If you have symptoms or think you've been exposed to trichomoniasis, get examined and treated immediately to avoid any complications.

## Do sex partners have to be treated?

Yes. If you're diagnosed with trichomoniasis, it's important to tell everyone you've had sex with over the past 2 months, so they can be examined and treated, too. Take *all* your medication as directed, even if you feel better before the medicine is finished. Don't have sex until you and the people you've had sex with have been completely treated, or you could infect each other again.

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## Trichomoniasis, Continued

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### What if I'm pregnant?

Untreated trichomoniasis during pregnancy can cause premature labor and can cause serious infection in the mother's womb after delivery.

All pregnant women should be tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, as early as possible in pregnancy. You should be tested again during your pregnancy if you are at higher risk for getting an STD. For example, you are at higher risk if you have a new sex partner during pregnancy, or if you have more than one partner. If left untreated, STDs can be devastating for your baby. To protect yourself and your baby against HIV and other STDs, use a latex condom whenever you have sex.

### How can I avoid trichomoniasis?

Sexually transmitted infections can be avoided by not having sex. *If you are sexually active*, you can reduce your risk of getting trichomonas and most other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, by having sex only in a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner you are sure is not infected. If you are having sex outside of such a relationship, you can reduce your risk of STDs by:

- 1) *Always using a latex condom (or other type of latex barrier) whenever you have sex – vaginal, anal, or oral.* Condoms made of "natural" materials, such as lambskin, protect against pregnancy, but not against STDs. If you are allergic to latex, you can use condoms made of polyurethane or other synthetic materials.
- 2) *Limiting the number of people you have sex with.*  
The more partners you have, the higher your risk.
- 3) *Avoiding alcohol and drugs when you have sex.* Drinking or getting high makes it much harder to remember to use condoms to protect yourself and others. For free, confidential help with a substance abuse problem, call 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638), or just call 311.

### More information

Free, confidential STD exams and treatment, and confidential or anonymous HIV counseling and testing, are available at Health Department clinics in all 5 boroughs of New York City. Health insurance, proof of citizenship, and parental consent are NOT required. For a list of clinics and hours, visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health), or call 311.

