

# Trichomonas Infection

Trichomonas infection is a sexually transmitted disease. It is not normally serious. However, the symptoms can be unpleasant. A short course of antibiotics usually clears the infection.

## What is trichomonas?

Trichomonas is a protozoan, which is a tiny bug, similar to bacteria. It can infect the genital area, but it does not usually go further into the body.

## What are the symptoms of a trichomonas infection?

### Women

- A vaginal discharge is common. This is usually greeny-yellow, and may be 'frothy'. The discharge usually has an unpleasant or fishy smell.
- Your vagina and vulva may be itchy and uncomfortable. The irritation may extend into the groin. Sex may be painful.
- It may be sore when you pass urine.
- No symptoms occur in up to half of infected women.

### Men

- Discharge from the penis is common.
- It may be sore when you pass urine.
- You may pass urine frequently (due to irritation inside the penis).
- Infection of the prostate or epididymis (next to the testis) are rare complications.
- No symptoms occur in up to half of infected men.

## How does trichomonas infection occur?

Having sex usually passes on Trichomonas infection. As no symptoms may occur in both men and women who are infected, you can pass on the infection without realizing it.

## **How is trichomonas infection diagnosed?**

It is important to get the correct diagnosis as the same symptoms can be caused by a number of different infections.

- A doctor or nurse may take a swab (sample of the discharge) from the vagina or penis. This is sent to the laboratory to be tested.
- Trichomonas is sometimes seen by chance when a smear test is done in women.
- A sample of urine from men may also show the infection.

## **What is the treatment for trichomonas infection?**

**An antibiotic called metronidazole** is the usual treatment. More than 9 in 10 infections clear with a short course of metronidazole tablets. Treatment is usually straightforward. Some points to note:

- Some people feel sick, and may vomit when taking metronidazole. This is less likely if you take the tablets straight after food.
- A metallic taste is also a common side effect.
- Do not drink any alcohol while taking metronidazole, and for at least 48 hours after stopping treatment. The interaction with alcohol can cause you to vomit and may cause other problems.

If you do not take treatment, in some cases the infection may clear away by itself. However, this may take several weeks, and there is no way of predicting if it will clear or not. So, treatment is usually advised in all cases.

## **Does my sexual partner need treating?**

Yes. Even if they do not have symptoms. You and your partner should be treated at the same time.

## **Some other points about trichomonas infection**

- You should not have sex until you have finished treatment, and symptoms have gone.
- In a small number of cases, treatment with metronidazole does not work at first. Further tests and treatment may then be needed.
- After you are treated, you may get the infection back if your sexual partner was not treated, or if you have sex with a new partner who has the infection.
- Other sexually transmitted infections are more common in people with trichomonas infection. You (and your partner) may be advised to be tested for other infections.