

Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*. Infections can occur in a penis or external genitals, and a vagina or internal genitals. The parasite can also be found in body fluids such as semen, pre-ejaculate, and vaginal fluids.

Trichomoniasis can be cured with antibiotics.

Causes

Trichomoniasis is passed through vaginal sexual contact. This includes both penetrative sex and sexual activities where there is an exchange of body fluids. You can also get Trichomoniasis by sharing sex toys. If you have Trichomoniasis, you can pass it to others even if you don't have symptoms.

Symptoms

If you have Trichomoniasis, it is common to not notice any symptoms. If you do get symptoms, they will most likely show up between 5 to 28 days after exposure. The type of symptoms you experience will depend on where the infection is located on your body. The most common symptoms include:

- Penis/external genitals: You may notice irritation, pain or trouble when urinating.
- Vagina/internal genitals: You may notice irritation, swelling, and abnormal discharge. You could have pain or trouble when urinating.

**Note: If you have had lower surgery, your genital symptoms may vary.*

Tests and Diagnosis

There are options for how you test for Trichomoniasis. A health care provider will recommend certain tests depending on the types of sex that you're having. Testing is usually done with urine or a swab sample.

It is best to get tested for Trichomoniasis if you have vaginal symptoms, or have a sexual partner who has tested positive for Trichomoniasis.

Treatment

Trichomoniasis is treated with prescription antibiotics. It is important to take all your medications as directed. If you miss any doses, the infection may not be cured. Go back to your health care provider if this happens or if you still have symptoms after you finish your treatment.

It is important to not have sex (even with a condom) for 7 days after the start of your treatment. If you do have sex during this time, you could pass Trichomoniasis to your sexual partner or get it again. If this happens, talk to your health care provider.

The medications used to treat Trichomoniasis are available for free in BC. Talk to your health care provider to see if they have them in stock.

Sexual Partners

Your sexual partners within the last two months should be tested and treated for Trichomoniasis. If you haven't had sex in the last two months, your last partner should be treated.

There are a few ways to tell partners. You can tell partners yourself or anonymously. Talk to your health care provider about what is right for you.

Complications

If Trichomoniasis is treated early, there are usually no other health problems. If left untreated, it can lead to serious complications including:

- higher chance of getting and passing HIV
- infertility

Pregnancy: Tell your health care provider if you are pregnant and have Trichomoniasis. There is an increased risk for the premature rupture of membranes.

Prevention

It is a good idea to be tested regularly for STIs, especially if you have new sexual partners or open relationships. Talking with partners about safer sex makes sure everyone knows what to expect. Condoms are great if they work for you – the correct use of condoms reduces your chances of getting and passing Trichomoniasis.

Resources

HealthLink BC – Information about Trichomoniasis in multiple languages

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/trichomoniasis>

SmartSexResource – If you are worried or have anxiety about Trichomoniasis

<https://smartsexresource.com/topics/worry-and-anxiety>

TransCareBC – Gender-affirming sexual and reproductive health information

<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/care-support/access-care/sexual-hlth>