

# STD/STI INFORMATIONAL FACT SHEET

## **TRICHOMONIASIS** (trick oh mo **NEYE** ah sis)

### ***What is trichomoniasis?***

Trichomoniasis is a genital inflammation caused by the one-cell, parasitic protzoa *trichomonas vaginalis*. Though most common in women, this STD affects both men and women.

### ***How common is trichomoniasis?***

An estimated 7.4 million new cases of trichomoniasis occur in women and men annually. This is the most common and curable STD among young, sexually active women.

### ***How is trichomoniasis transmitted?***

Trichomoniasis is transmitted mostly through skin-to-skin contact during unprotected anal, oral and vaginal intercourse with an infected person. The vagina is the most common site of infection for women. In males, the most common infection site is the urethra (urine canal). Transmission also may occur during mutual masturbation or anytime fluids from one partner pass to the genitals of the other, whether or not penetration occurs. A woman can get the disease from an infected man or woman, but a man usually gets trichomoniasis from a woman.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of trichomoniasis?**

Signs or symptoms generally occur in women within five to 28 days after exposure and men generally show no signs of infection. When symptoms occur in women, they may include: a yellow-green, frothy vaginal discharge with a strong, unpleasant odor; irritation and itching in and around the vagina; pain during intercourse; frequent urination with pain and burning; swelling in the groin; and in rare cases, lower abdominal pain. Pregnant women also may experience a premature rupture of membranes and a premature birth.

If men have any signs and symptoms related to trichomoniasis, they may experience temporary irritation inside the penis, a mild discharge, or a slight burning after urination, during intercourse, or after ejaculation.

### ***What are complications of trichomoniasis?***

The genital inflammation caused by trichomoniasis increases a woman's risk of contracting HIV infection if exposed to the virus. Also, if a woman is infected with both trichomoniasis and HIV, there is increased chance of transmitting both diseases to her partner(s).

### ***How does trichomoniasis affect a pregnant woman and her baby?***

Women who are pregnant and also have trichomoniasis may experience premature births or have low birth weight babies (less than five pounds). If diagnosed with the disease during the first trimester of pregnancy, the woman should not take medicine for treatment because it can hurt the fetus. It is safe to take medication after the first three months.

### ***How is trichomoniasis diagnosed?***

A correct diagnosis can only be determined by a health care provider while conducting a physical examination and laboratory tests. The disease is more difficult to identify in men than in women. In women, a pelvic examination can show small, red ulcerations (or sores) on the vaginal wall or cervix. For both women and men, a small sample of discharge from the vagina or penis can be put on a slide with saline solution to examine the pH level. An abnormal pH may be a sign of trichomoniasis. To help with the diagnosis, a woman should schedule examinations outside the time for her monthly period. Twenty-four hours prior to the exam, she should not douche or use vaginal sprays, and she should not have sexual intercourse without a condom.

### ***What is the treatment for trichomoniasis?***

Trichomoniasis is curable with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider. Both partners must undergo treatment simultaneously to prevent passing the infection back and forth. They also should finish the full course of antibiotics even if symptoms go away. However, a single dose of the antibiotic metronidazole should be sufficient to treat the disease. Metronidazole also can be used by pregnant women. Having trichomoniasis once does not protect a person from getting it again. Following successful treatment, people still can be susceptible to re-infection.

### ***How can trichomoniasis be prevented?***

The best way to prevent transmission of trichomoniasis is to abstain from sexual contact, or to be in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. When used consistently and correctly, latex condoms can reduce the risk of transmission of trichomoniasis during anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse. If either partner experiences any symptoms of the disease, sexual contact should stop until a health care provider is consulted. To prevent passing the infection back and forth, both (or all) partners should be treated simultaneously until each is cured.

Updated May 2007

For information about specific STDs/STIs, below are sources to use:

**Alan Guttmacher Institute  
(AGI)**

120 Wall Street, 21st Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
Phone: 212/248-1111  
Fax: 212/248-1951  
<http://www.agi-usa.org>

**American Social Health  
Association (ASHA)**

P. O. Box 13827  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-  
3827  
Phone: 800-783-9877  
<http://www.ashastd.org/>

**Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention – Sexually Transmitted  
Disease - STD information and  
referrals to STD Clinics**

CDC-INFO  
Phone: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-  
4636); TTY: 888-232-6348 In English,  
en Espanol  
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm>

**CDC National Prevention  
Information Network (NPIN)**

P.O. Box 6003  
Rockville, MD 20849-6003  
Phone: 800-458-5231;  
Fax: 888-282-7681  
1-800-243-7012 TTY  
E-mail: [info@cdcnpin.org](mailto:info@cdcnpin.org)

**The Henry J. Kaiser Family  
Foundation**

2400 Sand Hill Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
Phone: 650/854-9400  
Fax: 650/854-4800  
<http://www.kff.org>

**National Herpes Hotline (NHH)**

Open from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M., ET,  
Monday - Friday.  
Phone: 919/361-8488

**National HPV and Cervical  
Cancer Prevention Hotline**

Open from 2 P.M. to 7 P.M., ET,  
Monday - Friday.  
Phone: 919/361-4848

**Planned Parenthood Federation  
of America**

434 West 33rd St.  
New York, NY 10001  
212/541-7800  
FAX: 212/245-1845  
<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

**Sexuality Information and  
Education Council of the United  
States (SIECUS)**

130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350  
New York, New York 10036-7802  
Phone: 212/819-9770  
Fax: 212/819-9776  
<http://www.siecus.org>

**Virginia Department of Health**

109 Governor Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
VIRGINIA STD/AIDS HOTLINE  
Phone: 800-533-4148  
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/factsheets.htm>