



**[The Lambda Clinic - Sexual Health Advice - Patient Information Leaflet](http://www.lambdaclinic.co.uk/trichomonas-vaginalis.html)**  
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## **Trichomonas Vaginalis**

### **What is trichomonas vaginalis?**

Trichomonas vaginalis, sometimes called TV, is caused by a tiny parasite which infects the genital areas such as the vagina, urethra and sometimes the prostate gland in men. The infection does not usually penetrate deep into body tissues and therefore is not as serious as other sexually transmitted infections.

### **How do you get trichomonas infection?**

- Trichomonas is almost always passed on during sex i.e. by having vaginal intercourse or by sharing sex toys. Using condoms reduces the chances of trichomonas vaginalis infection.
- Pregnant women can pass on trichomonas vaginalis infection to the baby at birth.
- Usually most people do not get symptoms with trichomonas vaginalis infection and therefore you can pass on the infection without realising it.
- You cannot get trichomonas infection by hugging, kissing, sharing cups or from sharing a bath or swimming pools.

### **Symptoms of a trichomonas infection?**

Up to 50% of all people infected with trichomonas vaginalis infection will not have any symptoms at all i.e. they are asymptomatic.

Symptoms can show up 3 – 21 days after coming into contact with trichomonas vaginalis infection. This is known as the incubation period. Symptoms may include:

#### *Women*

- Commonly as a greenish yellow or 'frothy' vaginal discharge which usually has an unpleasant or fishy smell.
- Uncomfortable and itchy vulva and vagina.
- Painful sex.
- Sore to pass urine
- Sometimes there may be pain in the lower part of the abdomen.

#### *Men*

- Thin and whitish discharge from the penis.
- Sore to pass urine.
- Frequency of urine i.e. passing urine more frequently due to irritation inside the penis.



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

- Taking a swab of the discharge from the vagina / penis usually allows the results to be made available within 5 days.
- A urine sample from men may also show trichomonas infection.
- In women, trichomonas infection can sometimes be seen by chance when a smear test is done.

### **Treatment for trichomonas infection?**

- Metronidazole (antibiotic by prescription only) is the most commonly and effectively used treatment. More than 90% of trichomonas infections clear with a 5 – 7 days course of metronidazole tablets given at a dose of 400 mg twice a day. A single dose of 2 grams is an alternative but this is associated with more side effects and may be less effective.
- Some people feel sick or may vomit with metronidazole tablets but these symptoms can be reduced if the tablets are taken straight after food.
- It is usually not advisable to take any alcohol with metronidazole and for at least 48 hours after stopping treatment because this combination can cause vomiting and other problems.
- Metronidazole does get into breast milk but is not thought to affect breast fed babies. However, it is advisable to take a lower dose for 7 days.
- There is no evidence that complementary therapies can treat trichomonas infection.

### **Does my sexual partner need treating for trichomonas infection?**

It is best to treat your sexual partner even if they do not have symptoms. Treatment for both of you should be done at the same time and you should avoid having sexual intercourse until the full treatment has been finished, otherwise there is a risk of re-infecting one another.

### **How will I know how long I have had trichomonas infection for?**

It can be impossible to know for how long one has had trichomonas infection particularly if you do not get symptoms. Trichomonas infection may have been caught from your current or a previous sexual partner. These doubts can often be difficult to handle. Do not be afraid to talk to the Lambda Clinic staff about how you feel.

### **What happens if I get trichomonas infection when I am pregnant?**

- Trichomonas may cause problems with pregnancy such as premature birth or a low birth weight baby.
- Trichomonas infection can be passed to a baby during delivery but it can be successfully treated with antibiotics when you are pregnant or when breast feeding.

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