

VAGINITIS, TRICHOMONAL

(Trichomoniasis)

BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Infection or inflammation of the vagina caused by a parasite that lives in the lower genitourinary tract of males and females. This is very contagious between sexual partners. It involves the vagina, urethra and bladder in women; prostate gland and urethra in men.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Foul-smelling, frothy vaginal discharge that is most noticeable several days after a menstrual period.
- Vaginal itching and pain.
- Redness of the vaginal lips (labia) and vagina.
- Painful urination, if urine touches inflamed tissue. The severity of discomfort varies greatly from woman to woman and from time to time in the same woman. Infected men may have no symptoms.

CAUSES

Infection from a tiny parasite, *Trichomonas vaginalis*. The parasite passes from person to person during sexual intercourse. It may live in its host for years without producing symptoms. Then, perhaps from altered resistance, it will suddenly multiply rapidly and cause distressing symptoms. Since it thrives in both the male and female, both sexual partners must receive treatment.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Number of sexual partners.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Use rubber condoms during sexual intercourse.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Secondary bacterial infections.

TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory studies of vaginal discharge, Pap smear and pelvic examination.
- Both sexual partners require simultaneous treatment.
- Don't douche unless prescribed.

- Wear cotton underpants or pantyhose with a cotton crotch.
- Take showers instead of tub baths.
- If urinating causes burning: Urinate through a tubular device, such as a toilet-paper roll or plastic cup with the end cut out or pour a cup of warm water over the genital area while you urinate.
- Don't sit around in wet clothing, especially in a wet bathing suit.

MEDICATIONS

Metronidazole is usually prescribed for you and your sexual partner or partners. Follow directions carefully. Don't drink alcohol or use vinegar when you take metronidazole. Alcohol or vinegar and metronidazole interact to cause a violent reaction with nausea, vomiting, sweating, weakness and other symptoms.

ACTIVITY

Avoid overexertion, heat and excessive sweating. Delay sexual relations until you are well. Allow about 10 days for recovery.

DIET

No special diet instructions except those involving alcohol and vinegar (see Medications).

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of trichomonal vaginitis.
- Symptoms persist longer than 1 week or worsen, despite treatment.
- Unusual vaginal bleeding or swelling develops.
- After treatment, symptoms recur.

Adapted from Instructions for Patients, Sixth Edition, H. Winter Griffith, M.D., W.B Saunders Company.