Trichomonas vaginalis (TV) is caused by a tiny parasite. This produces an infection in the vagina and sometimes in the urethra in men. It is usually sexually transmitted.

**Men – know your body**

1. Anus
2. Scrotum
3. Urethra
4. Penis
5. Foreskin
6. Glans
7. Testicles

**Women – know your body**

1. Vagina
2. Clitoris
3. Cervix
4. Womb
5. Urethra
6. Anus

**Signs and symptoms**

**Women**

There may be no symptoms, but if there are they may include:

- a change in the vaginal discharge. This may increase, become thinner, frothy or yellow/green in colour and develop a musty/fishy smell
- soreness, inflammation and itching in and around the vagina
- pain when passing urine
- pain when having sex
Trichomonas vaginalis (TV)

Men
Often there are no symptoms, but if there are they may include:
- a discharge from the penis, which may be thin and whitish and may stain underwear
- pain, or a burning sensation, when passing urine

How TV is passed on
TV can be acquired by:
- having penetrative sex (when the penis enters the vagina, anus or mouth) with someone who has the infection
- sharing moist towels, washcloths, jacuzzis or hot baths where the parasite can live, although being infected by these non-sexual ways is extremely rare

Where to go for help
- Your local NHS sexual health (GUM) clinic. You can find details of your nearest NHS sexual health clinic in the phone book under genito-urinary medicine (GUM), sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or venereal diseases (VD). Or phone your local hospital and ask for the ‘special’ or GUM clinic. You will get free, confidential advice and treatment. You can go to any clinic anywhere in the country – you don’t have to go to a local one – and you don’t have to be referred by your GP. (Non-NHS sexual health clinics may not always offer the full range of services which are available at NHS sexual health clinics.)
- Your own GP.

The tests for TV
- An examination of your genital area is carried out by a doctor or a nurse.
- Samples are taken, using a cotton-wool or spongy swab, from the vagina or urethra.
- Women may be given an internal pelvic examination.
- Men are given an external examination of their testicles and scrotum.
- A sample of urine may be taken.
None of these tests should be painful, but they may be uncomfortable.

Diagnosis and treatment
Samples taken during the examination are looked at under a microscope to check for infection. In some clinics, the result is available immediately. A second sample may be sent to a laboratory for testing, the result of which is available usually within one week.

Sometimes TV will be discovered during a routine cervical smear test. Treatment is easy. You will be given antibiotic tablets.

If you are allergic to any antibiotics, or if there is any possibility that you may be pregnant, it is important that you tell your doctor.

It is important that you finish any course of treatment. If treatment is interrupted, it may be necessary to start again from the beginning.

Follow-up
Always return for a check-up after completing the treatment to ensure that the infection has gone.

You should not have penetrative sex (when the penis enters the vagina, mouth or anus) until you have returned to the clinic and been given the all-clear by the doctor.

Because it is possible to have TV and show no symptoms, your partner may be carrying the infection without knowing it. It is important if you have TV that your partner is treated as well.

Once TV has been successfully treated it rarely comes back unless you become reininfected.

Complications
Complications associated with TV are rare.

If a woman is infected when she gives birth to a baby girl the baby may become infected. The infection may involve the pregnant woman’s urinary tract as well as the vagina.

It is possible to have more than one sexually transmitted infection at the same time. That is why it is important to have a full examination and tests. NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics routinely test for a number of sexually transmitted infections.

Remember, after treatment, using condoms during sex can reduce your risk of getting or passing on sexually transmitted infections.
Trichomonas vaginalis (TV)

This factsheet is one of a series which give information on the following range of infections and diseases: bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, cystitis, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhoea, hepatitis (A, B and C), non-specific urethritis, penile cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), prostate cancer, pubic lice, scabies, syphilis, testicular cancer, thrush and trichomonas vaginalis.

Free copies of any of these factsheets are available from GP surgeries, NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics, or your local health promotion unit (in the phone book under your local Health Authority).

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