



Trichomonas Vaginalis - the basics

It is a curable sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a protozoon called *Trichomonas vaginalis*, or 'TV'. Protozoa are tiny germs similar to bacteria.

TV can infect the vagina, urethra (water passage), and underneath the foreskin.

Women may notice a change in vaginal discharge, and may have vulval itching or pain on passing urine.

Men may notice a discharge from the tip of the penis, pain on passing urine or soreness of the foreskin.

Testing is available at any specialised sexual health or Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) clinic and in some GP surgeries and contraceptive services.

If you have TV we recommend that you have tests for other STIs including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV.

How common is TV?

In 2011 just over 6,000 cases were diagnosed in England. In contrast, more than 186,000 cases of chlamydia were reported in the same year. Over 90% of TV cases are diagnosed in women.

How do you catch TV?

TV is passed on-

- through unprotected vaginal sex, insertion of fingers into the vagina or sharing sex toys with someone who has TV
- from an infected mother to her baby during normal childbirth (vaginal delivery)

TV cannot be caught from hugging, sharing baths or towels, swimming pools or toilet seats

What would I notice if I had TV?

Women may not notice anything wrong but they can still pass on TV to their sexual partner. Some women may notice one or more of the following:

- increased vaginal discharge
- an unpleasant vaginal smell
- 'cystitis' or burning pain when passing urine
- vulval itching or soreness
- pain in the vagina during sex

Most men will not feel anything wrong but they can still pass TV on to their sexual partner. Some men may notice one or more of the following:

- a discharge from the tip of the penis
- a burning pain when they pass urine
- they want to pass urine more often than normal
- soreness around the foreskin



Without treatment, the infection can last for months.

How do I get tested for TV?

In women:

- It is not a routine test in all clinics, but is usually done if you have symptoms. If you do have symptoms, it is best if a swab is taken from the upper vagina by a doctor or nurse during an internal examination. Some clinics can test for TV on a urine sample. If this test is planned you should not have passed urine for an hour.

In men:

- In most clinics it is not routine for men to be tested for TV. Men usually have a TV test because their sexual partner has tested positive. A swab is taken from the tip of the penis. Some clinics can test for TV on a urine sample. If this test is planned you should not have passed urine for an hour. Most of the tests for TV do not work very well in men and this explains why most men with TV infection will test negative.

Some TV test results may be available during your first visit to clinic (by looking at the samples under a microscope).

You will be informed about how you will receive your final results before leaving the clinic.

How is TV treated?

TV can be easily treated with antibiotics. Occasionally a second course of antibiotics is needed if your symptoms don't go away.

All treatments from sexual health clinics are free and are given to you in the clinic.

Important information about your treatment

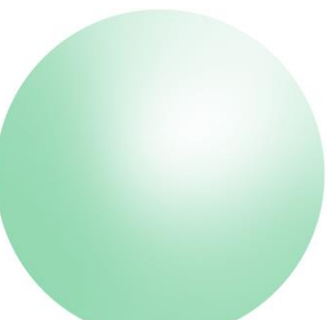
The antibiotics are highly effective if taken correctly.

The antibiotics don't interfere with your contraception.

You will be advised not to drink any alcohol while taking your antibiotics and for at least 48 hours after finishing treatment. This is because alcohol may cause the antibiotics to give you a severe headache and feeling of sickness. The antibiotics would still work if you get this reaction.

What about my partner?

As TV is an STI it is important that your partner is tested for TV as well as other STIs. It is important for you to know that the TV test used in most GUM clinics is very bad at finding TV in a man, even if he has the infection. This is the most important reason why your partner will almost certainly be offered antibiotics, even if his TV test is negative. If you wish, the clinic can contact your partner without mentioning your name. Some of your previous partners may also need testing – you will be advised about this.





When can I have sex again?

You should not have sex (even with a condom) until one week after both you and your partner have finished your treatment and any follow-up visit to the clinic.

What happens if my TV is left untreated?

It is very unusual for TV to cause serious complications.

In men:

- In rare cases, TV may infect the prostate gland causing symptoms such as pain in the genital region, pain on ejaculation and problems in passing urine.

Can I catch TV again?

Yes you can.

To prevent this make sure your partner has been treated before having sex with him/her again.

Protect yourself with new partners by ensuring a condom is used for all vaginal, anal and oral sex.

TV in pregnancy

TV can occur in pregnant women and it is important that it is treated properly.

If TV in pregnancy is not treated, there is an increased risk of labour starting early and the baby being delivered prematurely, or the baby having a low birth weight. At the moment we do not know if treating TV during pregnancy will stop these complications from happening.

The tests and treatment are the same in pregnancy. Your doctor will discuss things in more detail with you.

More information: <http://www.bashh.org/guidelines>

This leaflet was produced by the Clinical Effectiveness Group of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)

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