

# Neglected Parasitic Infections in the United States



## Trichomoniasis

Trichomoniasis is the most common curable sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. Trichomoniasis is caused by infection with a parasite (*Trichomonas vaginalis*). Women and men who have trichomoniasis are at higher risk for getting or spreading other STDs, including HIV. About 3.7 million people in the United States are infected with this parasite, and most do not have any signs or symptoms. Trichomoniasis is treated with prescription antimicrobial medication (one dose of metronidazole or tinidazole) but it is possible to become infected again.

Trichomoniasis is considered a neglected parasitic infection, one of a group of diseases that can result in serious illness among those who are infected, yet the burden and impact remain poorly understood.

## How People get Trichomoniasis:

Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD); the parasite is passed from an infected person to an uninfected person during sex. Women and men with trichomoniasis may notice redness, soreness, or itching of the genitals, burning with urination, or discharge. Without treatment, infection can last for months or even years.

Some people develop symptoms within 5 to 28 days after being infected, but others do not develop symptoms until much later or not at all. About 70% of infected people never have any signs or symptoms. Even without any symptoms, infected people can pass the infection to others.



*Trichomonas*

## Risk Factors for Acquiring Trichomoniasis:

- Both men and women can get infected.
- People with more sexual partners are more likely to become infected.
- Older women may be more likely than younger women to be infected.
- Black women may be more likely to be infected.
- Other risk factors for infection may include limited education and low socioeconomic status.

## Prevention of Trichomoniasis:

**Trichomoniasis is a preventable STD. People can reduce their risk by:**

- Using latex condoms consistently and correctly
- Consulting a health care provider if any signs or symptoms develop
- Notifying any recent sex partners so they can be treated too

## Why be Concerned about Trichomoniasis Infection in the United States?

- An estimated 3.7 million people are infected with *T. vaginalis* in the United States. Most infected people do not have any signs or symptoms of trichomoniasis and never know that they are infected.
- Having trichomoniasis increases the risk of getting or spreading other STDs, including HIV.
- Pregnant women with trichomoniasis may be more likely to deliver their babies too early. Babies born to infected mothers are more likely to have low birth weights.
- Other health consequences of asymptomatic *T. vaginalis* infection are not well defined.
- A recent study found that 4.3% of *T. vaginalis* infections were resistant to the only class of antimicrobial medication available to treat this infection, and this number may be increasing.

## What is CDC Doing to Address Trichomoniasis?

- CDC tracks the number of new and existing cases of trichomoniasis, including antimicrobial-resistant *T. vaginalis* infections, in the United States.
- Creates and publishes informational materials to educate the public about the infection.
- Offers national STD treatment guidelines, with evidence-based clinical recommendations to health care providers for screening and treating patients for trichomoniasis, including antimicrobial-resistant *T. vaginalis* infections.
- Provides continuing medical education (CME) courses and training for health care providers.
- Conducts laboratory testing to detect antimicrobial-resistant trichomoniasis.
- Works with key stakeholders at the local, state, national, and international levels to address trichomoniasis.

## What More is Needed?

- Better estimate of the burden of disease, including accounting for asymptomatic cases
- Improved strategies for reducing age, race, and other health disparities seen with trichomoniasis
- Further investigation of the role *T. vaginalis* infections play in HIV transmission
- Ongoing education for the public regarding steps individuals can take to keep themselves and their sex partners free of infection
- Development of new treatment options, especially for people who have antimicrobial-resistant infections or who are allergic to antimicrobial medications that are available for treatment
- Continued epidemiologic and laboratory support for efforts by key stakeholders including state and local health departments to prevent the spread of trichomoniasis

For more information on neglected parasitic infections, please visit [www.cdc.gov/parasites/npi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/npi.html)