It's time for straight talk

This is Heather, mother of two and married for ten years. She has a trichomonas infection and doesn’t know it. How can that be? Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) don’t discriminate, and if left untreated, they can have serious consequences to your long-term health.

For more information on trichomoniasis and other women’s health topics, please visit promisetome.com.
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After being married for over a decade, the thought of an STI has never crossed Heather’s mind. For years, she has been using douches and over-the-counter medications for what she assumes are yeast infections. However, her vaginal odor and discharge seem to keep coming back. She is embarrassed to talk about it with her healthcare provider. She has no idea that she has a trichomonas infection.

How can that be?

Regardless of relationship status, age, sexual preference or ethnicity, sexually transmitted infections don’t discriminate and if left untreated, they can have serious consequences to your long-term health. Here is what you should know about a very common and curable STI called trichomoniasis.

Trichomoniasis: It’s more common — and more curable — than you think

If you are experiencing abnormal vaginal symptoms, you are not alone. Every year, 10 million women visit their healthcare provider seeking a cure for vaginal itching, burning and abnormal discharge.1

It’s a little known fact, but trichomoniasis is the most common curable sexually transmitted infection and may be the underlying cause for your vaginal discomfort. So how do you know if getting tested makes sense for you?

Talk with your healthcare provider about being tested for trichomoniasis if:2

- You’re experiencing vaginal discharge.
- You have one of the following risk factors: new or multiple sex partners, another diagnosed STI(s) or inconsistent condom use.
- You’re HIV positive.
- You’re pregnant and experiencing vaginal symptoms such as abnormal vaginal discharge, itching or burning.
- You’ve already been diagnosed with a trichomonas infection. (You should repeat testing in 3 months.)

What are the risks of an untreated infection?

It’s easy to test and treat trichomonas infections; however, an untreated trichomoniasis infection can cause health consequences. Untreated infection risks include:

- Longer time to clear HPV infections.3
- A higher likelihood of contracting other STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea or herpes.4
- An increased risk of becoming infected with and passing on HIV.3
- In pregnant women, an associated risk with preterm delivery (baby born too soon) and low birth weight babies.5
- Anxiety and discomfort associated with symptoms.

Getting tested is easy

Providing a sample for testing is easy and painless. Your healthcare provider may collect a sample for testing along with your Pap test, by a vaginal swab or with a urine sample.

If you test positive — You are not alone. The fact that the infection has been identified and you can take steps to treat it is a good thing for you and your health. A positive test result does not necessarily mean that you or your partner are engaging in sex outside of your relationship. It is possible to have an infection for many years and not know it. Talk to your partner about being tested and treated to prevent re-infection.

If you test negative — Good news! Talk to your healthcare provider about scheduling an annual well-woman exam and make sure that you are getting the right tests to protect your overall health.