

CHLAMYDIA FACT SHEET

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WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can cause infection in the genitals, rectum, and/or throat.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

You can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has gonorrhea regardless of whether or not an individual ejaculates. Additionally, a pregnant person with untreated gonorrhea can transfer the infection to their baby during childbirth.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Chlamydia is one of the STD/STIs that can often show no symptoms – even so, it can cause serious and long term effects without present symptoms. If symptoms occur, there is a chance that they may not appear until several weeks after having sex with an individual who has chlamydia.

- Present symptoms for those with a vagina can include:
 - Painful/burning sensation when peeing; and
 - Abnormal vagina discharge
- Individuals with penis' who have present symptoms can include:
 - Painful/burning sensation when peeing;
 - Discharge from the penis; and
 - Swollen or painful testicles (less common)
- Rectal infections may cause symptoms regardless of sex/gender and can include:
 - Bleeding;
 - Discharge; and
 - Bleeding
- Additional symptoms can include:
 - A new, unusual sore;
 - Discharge with odor;
 - Vaginal bleeding between menstruation cycles; and
 - Burning with urination

You should see a healthcare professional if you or your partner(s) notice any of these symptoms or if you/your partner have a known STD.

COMPLICATIONS OF CHLAMYDIA

Since chlamydia often does not present symptoms, the initial damage done to the body can go unnoticed and cause serious health problems. For those that have a uterus, untreated chlamydia can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), of which the following complications can occur:

- Long term pelvic/abdominal pain
- Ectopic pregnancy (unviable pregnancy that occurs outside of the womb)
- Formation of scar tissue that blocks fallopian tubes; and
- Infertility (the inability to become and maintain a pregnancy)
- Though those that have a penis rarely have health problems related to chlamydia, chlamydia can cause a painful condition associated with the tubes attached to the testicles, which can lead to infertility
- Untreated gonorrhea can increase your chances of contracting and/or spreading HIV.

WHO'S AT RISK?

Any sexually active individual can contract and spread chlamydia through vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex with a partner. Having an open and honest conversation about your sexual practices with your health practitioner is always recommended for guidance specific to your sexual practices. Generally, if you are a sexually active person with a penis who also has sex with individuals with penises, it is recommended that you get tested for chlamydia annually. If you are a sexually active person with a vagina, it is recommended that you get tested for chlamydia annually if:

- Younger than 25 years of age
- 25 years old or older with additional risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner that has a known STI/STD

I'M PREGNANT – WHAT NOW?

If you are pregnant and positive for chlamydia, you are more likely to deliver your baby early and you can pass the infection to your child and this can lead to health problems, including pneumonia and an eye infection. You should receive testing for chlamydia at your first prenatal visit. Please talk to your healthcare provider about examination, testing, and treatment. The sooner you receive treatment, the less likely there will be health complications for your baby.

TEST OPTIONS

Often, testing will be collected from a urine sample – if you have also had oral and/or anal sex, your health practitioner might also utilize swabs to collect a sample from your throat and/or rectum. Certain cases might warrant a swab collected from the urethra in the penis or the cervix.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

The right treatment can cure chlamydia – it is important to complete the treatment plan your health practitioner provides entirely i.e. do not share your medication or take only a portion of the medication provided. Medication will stop the infection, however, it will not undo any permanent damage caused by the disease.

WHEN TO HAVE SEX AGAIN?

You should wait 7 full days after completing treatment to have sex again if you were given a single dose of medicine – if given medicine to take for 7 days, you should wait to have sex until you have completed all of the doses. If you've had chlamydia and received treatment in the past, you can still contract chlamydia again. As such, you and your partner(s) should avoid having sex until treatment is completed and symptoms have fully resolved to prevent reinfection. Three months after treatment, you and your partner(s) should be retested regardless of a successful treatment.