

Gonorrhea Culture (Discharge)



Does this test have other names?

GC culture, gonorrhea test, GC test

What is this test?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *N. gonorrhoeae*. These bacteria often thrive in moist areas of the reproductive and urinary systems. But they can also grow in the eyes, mouth and throat, or anus. This test uses samples from the cervix, urethra, penis, rectum, or throat.

Lab technicians then culture or grow the sample by putting it in a special container. If the bacteria that cause gonorrhea to grow in your sample, it's likely that you have gonorrhea.

Although cultures may be grown in the lab, another test called gonorrhea nucleic acid amplification (NAAT) is done more often.

Why do I need this test?

You may have this test if you have certain risk factors that increase the chance of gonorrhea infection. You may also have this test if your healthcare provider suspects you have gonorrhea. Gonorrhea is easily cured, but it can be dangerous and even life-threatening if not treated. It often causes pelvic inflammatory disease in women. This can lead to pain and infertility. It can also cause infertility in men and a potentially fatal blood infection in both women and men.

Women with gonorrhea often have no symptoms. Those with symptoms of gonorrhea may have:

- Vaginal discharge
- Burning sensation when urinating
- Bleeding between periods
- Pelvic pain

Men may have:

- Discharge from the penis
- Pain when urinating
- Painful or swollen testicles

Anal itching, soreness and bleeding, and painful bowel movements are symptoms of anal gonorrhea. Gonorrhea of the throat may cause a sore throat, but most times there are no symptoms.

If you are pregnant, you may also be checked for gonorrhea as part of prenatal testing. A pregnant woman can pass gonorrhea to her baby during delivery. This may cause blindness or a potentially fatal blood infection. Finding and treating gonorrhea prevents such problems.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

If you are female, your healthcare provider may take a sample from your vagina or cervix. If you are male, your healthcare provider may take a sample from your urethra. If you have had anal or oral sexual contact, your provider will do a rectal or throat culture. A sample of urine may also be checked. You may also have lab tests to check for other STIs.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

A negative, or normal, test result means the lab has found no evidence of gonorrhea. If you test positive for gonorrhea, you are most likely infected. Your sexual partner or partners should be tested and treated as well.

How is this test done?

A healthcare provider uses a sterile, cotton-tipped swab to take a sample from the area to be tested. They may take swabs of more than one area. Instead, you may be given instructions to collect your own samples. Or a urine sample may also be tested.

Does this test pose any risks?

This test poses no known risks.

What might affect my test results?

If you are providing a urine sample, urinating within 1 to 2 hours of testing may affect the results. Taking antibiotics can also affect your test results. If you are female, your test results could be affected by douching or using vaginal creams within 24 hours of testing.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to prepare for this test, but women should not douche or use vaginal creams within 24 hours of testing. For urine testing, you should not urinate within 1 to 2 hours of testing. Also be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any street drugs you may use.

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