

About Chlamydia



For Everyone

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KEY POINTS

- Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can be treated.
- People who are sexually active can get chlamydia.
- This fact sheet answers basic questions about chlamydia.



Overview

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common STI that can cause infection among men and women. It can cause permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system. This can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant later. Chlamydia can also cause a potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the womb).

Signs and symptoms

How do I know if I have chlamydia?

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Symptoms in women

Even when chlamydia has no symptoms, it can damage a woman's reproductive system. Women with symptoms may notice:

- An abnormal vaginal discharge
- A burning sensation when peeing

Symptoms in men

Men with symptoms may notice:

- Penis discharge
- A burning sensation when peeing
- Pain and swelling in one or both testicles (although this is less common)

Symptoms from rectal infections

Men and women can also get chlamydia in their rectum. This happens either by having receptive anal sex, or by spread from another infected site (such as the vagina). While these infections often cause no symptoms, they can cause:

- Rectal pain

- Discharge
- Bleeding

See your healthcare provider if you notice any of these symptoms. You should also see a provider if your partner has an STI or symptoms of one. Symptoms can include an unusual sore, a smelly discharge, burning when peeing, and bleeding between periods.

Risk factors

Am I at risk for chlamydia?

Sexually active people can get chlamydia through vaginal, anal, or oral sex without a condom with a partner who has chlamydia.

If you are sexually active, have an honest and open talk with your healthcare provider. Ask them if you should get tested for chlamydia or other STIs.

How it spreads

How is chlamydia spread?

You can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex without a condom with someone who has the infection. A pregnant woman with chlamydia can give the infection to her baby during childbirth.

Prevention

How can I reduce my risk of getting chlamydia?

The only way to completely avoid STIs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

If you are sexually active, the following things can lower your chances of getting chlamydia:

- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and does not have chlamydia
- Using condoms [the right way](#) every time you have sex

I'm pregnant. If I have chlamydia, how can I protect my baby from getting it?

If you are pregnant and have chlamydia, you can give the infection to your baby during delivery. This can cause serious health problems for your baby. If you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about getting the [correct examination, testing, and treatment](#). Treating chlamydia as soon as possible will make health problems for your baby less likely.

Testing and diagnosis

Should I be tested for chlamydia?

If you are sexually active, have an honest and open talk with your healthcare provider. Ask them if you should get tested for chlamydia or other STIs.

If you are a sexually active gay or bisexual man, you should get tested for chlamydia every year. If you are a sexually active woman, you should get tested for chlamydia every year if you are:

- Younger than 25 years
- 25 years and older with risk factors, such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection

Testing is also recommended during pregnancy [in some cases](#).

How will my healthcare provider know if I have chlamydia?

Laboratory tests can diagnose chlamydia. Your healthcare provider may ask you to provide a urine sample for testing, or they might use (or ask you to use) a cotton swab to get a vaginal sample.

Treatment and recovery

Is there a cure for chlamydia?

Yes, the right treatment can cure [chlamydia](#). It is important that you take all of the medicine your healthcare provider gives you to cure your infection. Do not share medicine for chlamydia with anyone. When taken properly it will stop the infection and could decrease your chances of having problems later. Although medicine will stop the infection, it will not undo any permanent damage caused by the disease.

Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. You should receive testing again about three months after your treatment, even if your sex partner(s) receives treatment.

When can I have sex again after my chlamydia treatment?



You should not have sex again until you and your sex partner(s) complete treatment. If given a single dose of medicine, you should wait seven days after taking the medicine before having sex. If given medicine to take for seven days, wait until you finish all the doses before having sex.

If you've had chlamydia and took medicine in the past, you can still get it again. This can happen if you have sex without a condom with a person who has chlamydia.

What happens if I don't get treated?

The initial damage that chlamydia causes often goes unnoticed. However, chlamydia can lead to serious health problems.

In women, untreated chlamydia can cause [pelvic inflammatory disease](#) (PID). Some of the complications of PID are:

- Formation of scar tissue that [blocks fallopian tubes](#) 
- Ectopic pregnancy ([pregnancy outside the womb](#) 
- [Infertility](#) (not being able to get pregnant)
- Long-term pelvic/abdominal pain

Men rarely have health problems from chlamydia. The infection can cause a fever and pain in the tubes attached to the testicles. This can, in rare cases, lead to infertility.

Untreated chlamydia may also increase your chances of getting or giving HIV.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention; About Division of STD Prevention](#)