# **Listerine to treat gonorrhoea? Daily rinsing and gargling helps to curb the spread of the STI**

* **People can carry gonorrhoea in their throats for months without showing signs**
* **This can be passed on through oral sex - but mouthwash can kill the bacteria**
* **Gargling with Listerine could be the easiest way to curb the spread, experts say**

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A commercial brand of mouthwash can help to prevent gonorrhoea from spreading, new research suggests.

Daily rinsing and gargling with Listerine may be a cheap and easy way to curb the spread of 'the clap', experts believe.

Despite being spread sexually, it is known that people can carry the infection in their throats for months on end without suffering any symptoms.

This can be then be passed on through oral sex, but declining condom use is still causing a surge in cases.

But rising rates heighten the risk of the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of Neisseria gonnorhoeae - the bacteria responsible.

This makes the need for a preventative measure that doesn't rely on condoms even more urgent, scientists claim.

As far back as 1879, and before the advent of antibiotics, the manufacturer of Listerine claimed it could be used to cure gonorrhoea.

However, scientific evidence was to justify this was scarce.

In a bid to rectify this, Australian researchers assessed whether Listerine could curb the growth of the bacteria responsible.

For laboratory tests, different dilutions of Listerine Cool Mint and Total Care, both of which contain 21.6 per cent alcohol used.

By way of comparison, a salt water solution was also applied to an identical set of cultures.

They found applied for up to one minute, dilutions of up to 1 in 4 significantly reduced the bacteria. While the salt water was unable to.

In a second part of their research, they assessed 196 gay and bisexual men who had previously tested positive for gonorrhoea in their mouths.

Almost a third once again tested positive for the bacteria in their throat on their return to a sexual health clinic in Melbourne.

Thirty three of these men were randomly assigned to a rinse and gargle with Listerine and the rest with the saline solution.

After rinsing and gargling for one minute, gonorrhoea in the throat was reduced by 48 per cent in those using Listerine.

While those using the salt water solution cut their bacteria by just 16 per cent.

And the men using Listerine were 80 per cent less likely to test positive for gonorrhoea in their throat five minutes after gargling.

'This readily available, condom-less, and low cost intervention may have very significant public health implications in the control of gonorrhoea,' the researchers wrote in the journal Sexually Transmitted Infections.

However, they say more research is needed to confirm their results to determine if mouthwash is an effective way to curb the spread of gonorrhoea.