**ORAL HYGIENE**

# **Gargling with Listerine mouthwash ‘STOPS the spread of gonorrhoea’**

Scientists in Melbourne, Australia, found gangling for just one minute killed STI bacteria in around half of cases

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20th December 2016, 9:50 am

REGULAR gargling with mouthwash could help control the spread of gonorrhoea, a study has suggested.

The relatively common STI can be carried in the mouth and throat and passed on through oral sex.

In 1879 – in the era before antibiotics – the maker of popular mouthwash brand Listerine claimed it could be used to cure gonorrhoea.

Scientists decided to test out the claim, launching a clinical trial using gay or bisexual men – after this group was found to be experiencing a rise in cases of the disease.

The trial focused on a group of 58 gay or bisexual men in Melbourne, Australia, who tested positive for gonorrhoea in their mouths and throat between May 2015 and February 2016.

The researchers split the group in two – with 33 men randomly assigned to rinse and gargle with Listerine, and 25 doing the same with a saline solution.

The results revealed a significant drop in the group that gargled mouthwash compared to the others.

Just 52 per cent of those that used Listerine for one minute were found to have viable gonorrhoea in their throats afterwards, compared to 84 per cent among the saline solution group.

The study, published in the journal Sexually Transmitted Infections, concluded: “Our data provides preliminary evidence to support the further investigation of mouthwash as a non-condom-based control measure for gonorrhoea.

“Listerine mouthwash is a cheap, easy to use and effective agent that inhibits gonorrhoea growth and requires further careful consideration and study.”

The study was carried out by 10 researchers from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Monash University Faculty of Medicine and The University of Melbourne Microbiological Diagnostic Unit Public Health Laboratory.

Researchers are now conducting a bigger trial to confirm the preliminary findings and to establish if the apparent effects are only short-lived.

They say it is important to find a preventive measure that does not rely on condoms to ensure antibiotic-resistant strains of Neisseria gonnorhoeae, the bacteria responsible for the infection, do not develop.

Gonorrhoea can be easily passed between people through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex, as well as sharing sex toys that have not been washed or covered with a new condom each time they are used.

Around one in 10 infected men and almost half of infected women do not experience any symptoms.