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Chlamydia Infections

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common **sexually transmitted infection** [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>] (STI). It is caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Anyone can get chlamydia. It often doesn't cause symptoms, so people may not know that they have it. Antibiotics can cure it. But if it's not treated, chlamydia can cause serious health problems.

How is chlamydia spread?

You can get chlamydia during oral, vaginal, or anal sex with someone who has chlamydia. Chlamydia can also be passed to the baby during childbirth [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirth.html>] .

If you've had chlamydia and were treated in the past, you can get re-infected if you have unprotected sex with someone who has it.

Who is more likely to get chlamydia?

Chlamydia is more common in young people, especially young women. You are more likely to get infected with chlamydia if you don't consistently use a condom or if you have multiple partners.

What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

Chlamydia doesn't usually cause any symptoms. So you may not realize that you have it. But even if you don't have symptoms, you can still pass the infection to others.

If you do have symptoms, they may not appear until several weeks after you have sex with someone who has chlamydia.

Symptoms in women include:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge, which may have a strong smell
- A burning sensation when urinating

If the infection spreads, you might get lower **abdominal (belly) pain** [<https://medlineplus.gov/abdominalpain.html>] , pain during sex, nausea [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>] , and fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>] .

Symptoms in men include:

- Discharge from your penis
- A burning sensation when urinating (peeing)
- Pain and swelling in one or both testicles (although this is less common)

If the chlamydia infects the rectum (in men or women), it can cause rectal pain, discharge, and bleeding.

How is chlamydia diagnosed?

There are lab tests to diagnose chlamydia. Your health care provider may ask you to provide a urine sample. Or your provider may use (or ask you to use) a cotton swab to get a sample from your vagina to test for chlamydia.

Who should be tested for chlamydia?

You should go to your provider for a test if you have symptoms of chlamydia or if you have a partner who has an STI. If you are pregnant, you should get a test when you go to your first prenatal visit [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenatalcare.html>] .

People at higher risk should get checked for chlamydia every year:

- Sexually active women 25 and younger
- Older women who have new or multiple sex partners or a sex partner who has an STI
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)

What other problems can chlamydia cause?

In women, an untreated infection can spread to your uterus and fallopian tubes, causing pelvic inflammatory disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/pelvicinflammatorydisease.html>] (PID). PID can cause permanent damage to your reproductive system. This can lead to long-term pelvic pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/pelvicpain.html>] , infertility [<https://medlineplus.gov/femaleinfertility.html>] , and ectopic pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ectopicpregnancy.html>] . Women who have had chlamydia infections more than once are at higher risk of serious reproductive health complications.

Men often don't have health problems from chlamydia. Sometimes it can infect the epididymis (the tube that carries sperm). This can cause pain, fever, and, rarely, infertility [<https://medlineplus.gov/maleinfertility.html>] .

Both men and women can develop reactive arthritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/infectiousarthritis.html>] because of a chlamydia infection. Reactive arthritis is a type of arthritis that happens as a "reaction" to an infection in the body.

Babies born to infected mothers can get eye infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/eyeinfections.html>] and pneumonia [<https://medlineplus.gov/pneumonia.html>] from chlamydia. It may also make it more likely for your baby to be born too early [<https://medlineplus.gov/preterm labor.html>] .

Untreated chlamydia may also increase your chances of getting or giving HIV [<https://medlineplus.gov/hiv.html>] .

What are the treatments for chlamydia?

Antibiotics will cure the infection. You may get a one-time dose of the antibiotics, or you may need to take medicine every day for 7 days. It is important to take all the medicine that your provider prescribed for you. Antibiotics cannot repair any permanent damage that the disease has caused.

To prevent spreading the disease to your partner, you should not have sex until the infection has cleared up. If you got a one-time dose of antibiotics, you should wait 7 days after taking the medicine to have sex again. If you have to take medicine every day for 7 days, you should not have sex again until you have finished taking all of the doses of your medicine.

It is common to get a repeat infection, so you need to get tested again about three months after treatment.

Can chlamydia be prevented?

The only sure way to prevent chlamydia is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

Correct usage of latex condoms greatly reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading chlamydia. If your or your partner is allergic to latex [<https://medlineplus.gov/latexallergy.html>] , you can use polyurethane condoms.


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- About Chlamydia [<https://www.cdc.gov/chlamydia/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**

Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/chlamydia/es/about/acerca-de-las-infecciones-por-clamidia.html>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Chlamydia Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/chlamydia-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-clamidia/>]

Related Issues

- Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Syphilis [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/chlamydia-gonorrhea-and-syphilis>]
(American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- Epididymitis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/epididymitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20363853?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/epididymitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20363853?p=1>]


Images

- Chlamydial Infections [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/chlamydial-infections/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)

Statistics and Research

- FastStats: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/stds.htm>]
(National Center for Health Statistics)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Chlamydia Infections [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Chlamydia+Infections%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Chlamydia and gonorrhoea infections in young Kenyan HIV-negative cisgender men who... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40750281>]
- Article: Association between prior antibiotic use and reduced chlamydia trachomatis infection prevalence:... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40713671>]
- Article: Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Infection Rates in Wisconsin, 2010-2022. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40690633>]
- Chlamydia Infections -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Chlamydia+Infections%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Chlamydia (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/chlamydia.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/chlamydia.html>]

Women

- Chlamydia [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/chlamydia>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)

Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/chlamydia>]

Patient Handouts

- Chlamydia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001345.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001345.htm>]
- Chlamydia infections in women [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000660.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000660.htm>]
- Chlamydial infections - male [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000659.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000659.htm>]
- Condom Use: An Overview [<https://www.cdc.gov/condom-use/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Endocervical Gram stain [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003753.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003753.htm>]
- Lymphogranuloma venereum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000634.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000634.htm>]
- Urethral discharge culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003750.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003750.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Chlamydia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001345.htm>]

Chlamydia infections in women [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000660.htm>]

Chlamydial infections - male [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000659.htm>]

Endocervical Gram stain [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003753.htm>]

Lymphogranuloma venereum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000634.htm>]

Urethral discharge culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003750.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Sexually Transmitted Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Chlamydia Infections* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

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