

CHLAMYDIA and GONORRHEA

What are chlamydia and gonorrhea?

Chlamydia (cla-mid-ee-uh) and gonorrhea (gon-or-re-a) are common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) caused by two different bacteria. You can have the infection before symptoms show up and some people never have symptoms. Even if you have no symptoms, chlamydia and gonorrhea can spread from one person to another during unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sex or through sharing of sex toys. It can take 2-6 weeks or longer for chlamydia and 2-7 days or longer for gonorrhea symptoms to show up after you have had sex with an infected person.

What are the symptoms?

Sometimes people have no symptoms or symptoms so mild they can be mistaken for something else. If you do have symptoms, they could include:

Men:

- discharge from penis
- burning/itching around tip of penis
- pain or burning when passing urine
- painful or swollen testicles
- rectal pain

Women:

- increased vaginal discharge
- pain or burning when passing urine
- pain or bleeding during sex
- bleeding after sex
- bleeding between menstrual periods
- pain in the lower abdomen
- rectal pain

Are there complications?

If chlamydia or gonorrhea is not treated, there can be serious problems. Having any STI can increase your chances of becoming infected with HIV if you come in contact with it. These infections might also spread to other parts of the body.

Men:

If untreated, chlamydia and gonorrhea can cause infection to the testicles and prostate gland and could make a man sterile (infertile).

Women:

If untreated, chlamydia and gonorrhea can spread to the fallopian tubes and ovaries and may cause chronic pelvic pain or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause a tubal pregnancy (the pregnancy occurs in the fallopian tube). Untreated chlamydia is one of the main reasons women are unable to get pregnant (infertility).

If a pregnant woman has chlamydia or gonorrhea, it can be passed to the baby during delivery and may lead to complications such as eye or lung infections.

How do I know if I have chlamydia or gonorrhea?

The only way to know if you are infected is to get tested. Chlamydia and gonorrhea can be diagnosed by taking a swab from a woman's cervix or the tip of a man's penis, from the throat (for oral sex) or from the anus (for anal sex). These infections can also be found by having a special urine test. Do not urinate (pee) for 1 hour before giving a urine sample.

How are chlamydia and gonorrhea treated?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are treated with different antibiotics. Because it is possible to have both infections at the same time, you may be given two different medications.

To cure chlamydia and gonorrhea, take all the pills given to you. Do not have sexual (oral, vaginal, anal) contact, even with a condom, during treatment and for at least 7 days after treatment.

Your partner(s) must be tested and treated at the same time to so you don't re-infect each other.

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Is follow-up important?

If you take the medication as recommended, your symptoms disappear and you have not been exposed to an untreated or new contact, there is no need to return.

You should return for a follow up test if you did not take the medication as instructed, if you are pregnant, if you have been exposed to an untreated contact or new contact, if the health professional tells you or you continue to have any symptoms.

You should be screened on a regular basis such as every 6 months, or more often if you think you have been exposed or have symptoms.

What about my partners and contacts?

It is important that all sexual contacts(s) be tested and treated, whether they have symptoms or not. These infections are reportable to public health so public health staff will be asking for the names of your sexual contacts so all contacts can be informed, tested and treated.

Remember: Condoms will help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and hepatitis B.

Condoms are free at Healthy Sexuality clinics.

**For more information call
Peel Public Health 905-799-7700
and ask for Sexual Health Information
or visit
intheknowpeel.ca peelsexualhealth.ca peelregion.ca**