

Chlamydia

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmissible infection that can affect both men and women. It is caused by bacterium. Many people who are infected with the bacterium do not have symptoms of infection but can still transmit the bacterium. Chlamydia can affect the urethra (the urine passage), cervix (the neck of the womb), rectum and anus, throat, and eyes. Chlamydia infection can result in complications, but it is preventable.

How do you catch chlamydia?

Chlamydia is spread by having sex with someone who has the infection.

The people who are most at risk of catching chlamydia are:

- young sexually active men and women;
- anyone who has recently changed sexual partners;
- anyone who has recently had another sexually transmitted infection.

How do you know if you have been infected with chlamydia?

Symptoms can occur within 2–14 days after infection. However, a person may have chlamydia for months, or even years, without knowing it.

In women

If a woman has chlamydia, she may notice:

- cramps or pain in the lower abdomen;
- menstrual changes (that is, changes with her periods);
- pain when passing urine;
- bleeding or pain during or after sex;
- a change in her vaginal discharge.

In men

If a man has chlamydia, he may notice:

- a discharge from the penis;
- pain when passing urine;
- swollen and sore testicles.

In men and women

Infection of the anus can occur but usually goes unnoticed. Occasionally it can cause anal pain or discharge.

Is there a test for chlamydia?

Chlamydia can be diagnosed by your local doctor or sexual health clinic. The doctor will take a swab from the urethra, cervix, or anus, or a urine sample. The swab or sample will then be tested for chlamydia at a laboratory.

What is the treatment for chlamydia?

Chlamydia is easily cured by antibiotics. It is important to see your doctor or sexual health clinic to get tested and treated. If the symptoms return, return to your doctor or sexual health clinic.

It is important that you finish the entire course of antibiotics, even after the symptoms resolve, as the chlamydia bacteria may not have been totally killed. It is also important not to have sex for at least 7 days after the treatment begins, because the infection can still be spread.

Are there any complications?

Yes. If chlamydia is not properly treated it can cause serious complications.

In women complications include:

- pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This is when the reproductive organs that are situated in the pelvis become inflamed;
- pelvic adhesions and chronic pelvic pain;
- infertility due to damage to the fallopian tubes (by scar tissue);
- ectopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy develops in the fallopian tubes instead of in the uterus).

In men complications include:

- recurrent urethritis;
- epididymitis (which involves the tube to the testes).

In women and men complications include:

- arthritis;
- conjunctivitis and uveitis (eye inflammation);
- proctitis (inflammation of the rectum).

Do sexual partners need treatment?

Yes. If you have chlamydia you should tell all your sexual partners over the last six months to see a doctor or your local sexual health clinic for testing and treatment.

How is chlamydia prevented?

Using a condom for vaginal or anal sex can prevent chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections. Condom use is especially important among those who have more than one sexual partner.

Further information - Public Health Units in NSW**1300 066 055**www.health.nsw.gov.au