

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a very common sexually transmitted disease (STD). It is caused by germs passed from one person to another during sexual activity, including vaginal, anal, and oral sex. It can also be passed from mother to baby during birth. Anyone who is infected should be treated immediately.

If chlamydia is not treated, there can be serious problems for both men and women.

Signs and symptoms

Most people who have chlamydia don't know they have it because they don't have symptoms. They may suffer serious problems later and can pass the disease on to others. If symptoms occur at all, they start 1–3 weeks after having sex with an infected partner.

Men with chlamydia may have a very slight discharge from the penis or a burning feeling while urinating. Women may have a little more vaginal discharge than usual or very slight bleeding at times when this is not normal. Other signs are a burning feeling when urinating, low belly pain or fever.

Testing

The most common test is a urine sample that is sent to a laboratory. Not all doctors do the test, so be sure to ask for one if you are sexually active. A good time to have this test is when a woman has her regular Pap exam. In some cases, a doctor or nurse may take some fluid from the vagina or penis and send it to the lab.

A new test allows the woman to get her own vaginal sample with a swab, but this test may not be available everywhere.

Treatment

Your doctor will give you a prescription for an antibiotic. Some are taken for only one day, others for as long as 10 days. Take all your medicine, even after you start to feel better. It is important to tell your doctor if you are pregnant because he or she might give you a different medicine. All your sex partners must be treated too, or you will get chlamydia again.

What happens if you don't get treated?

Untreated chlamydia is a leading cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women. The tiny tubes of the reproductive system can become scarred and blocked as the body fights the infection. This can lead to infertility. Babies can get eye, ear, and lung infections from mothers with chlamydia. In men, chlamydia can cause an inflammation of the testicles called epididymitis. It is fairly rare but can cause fever, pain, and swelling. Like PID in women, the damage can be severe enough to cause sterility.

Prevention

- **Know your sex partners**—go with them for STD tests.
- **Use condoms correctly every time you have sex.**
- **Have fewer partners.** The more partners you have, the greater your chances of getting chlamydia.
- **Birth control pills do not prevent infection.**

Learn more about chlamydia

If you have questions or need more information, contact your doctor, local health department, or community clinic, or call the National STD Hotline at **1-800-227-8922**.

For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 1-800-833-6388).