

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA

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## What Are Chlamydia and Gonorrhea?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are 2 of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and their incidence is increasing. They are caused by different bacteria and can be spread by oral, vaginal, or anal sex. The bacteria grow and multiply in warm, moist areas like the mouth, throat, eyes, anus, and urethra (the tube carrying urine out of the body) and, in women, inside the cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea must be diagnosed and treated early to prevent complications, infection of others, and reinfection. Complications include infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Untreated infections increase your chances of getting or spreading HIV. If you are pregnant, these infections can pass to your baby and cause serious health complications, like blindness.

## What Are the Symptoms?

Most women do not have symptoms. If symptoms are present, they are usually mild and can be similar to those of a urinary tract infection. Symptoms can include:

- Burning or pain while urinating
- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Vaginal bleeding between periods
- Pain during sex

Men are more likely to have symptoms, which may include:

- Discharge from the penis
- Pain while urinating
- Irritation or itching
- Swelling or pain in the testicles or scrotum if the infection has progressed

Symptoms are usually absent in nongenital infections but can include:

- Sore throat
- Anal discharge, soreness, or bleeding or painful bowel movements

## Am I at Risk?

Any sexually active person can be infected through unprotected sexual activity. Any person with symptoms, regardless of age, sex, or sexual orientation, should be promptly tested and treated if positive.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea affect young adults, men who have sex with men, and minorities more often. Men who have sex with men should be tested for infection at least yearly. Sexually active women younger than 25 years should be tested for infection each year to prevent infertility and ectopic pregnancy. Older women at increased risk should also be screened at least yearly. Factors that increase risk include:

- Having a new sex partner
- Having more than 1 sex partner
- Having a sex partner who has other sex partners
- Having a sex partner who has an STI
- Not using condoms regularly in a nonmonogamous relationship



- Having a previous STI or another current STI
- Exchanging sex for money or drugs

## Can They Be Prevented?

You can reduce your risk for chlamydia and gonorrhea by using condoms and limiting the number of sex partners you have. You can reduce your risk of spreading these infections by avoiding sexual activity if you have symptoms of an infection, getting tested and treated quickly, and informing your partners so they can get tested and treated.

## How Are They Diagnosed?

Your doctor may order a urine test or swabs to confirm your diagnosis.

## How Are They Treated?

- Chlamydia is treated by an antibiotic taken by mouth twice a day for 7 days. For pregnant women or women who cannot take the 7-day dose, a different antibiotic is used that can be taken once by mouth.
- Gonorrhea is treated with a 1-time shot of an antibiotic.
- If you are diagnosed with gonorrhea but are not sure if you have chlamydia, you should be treated for both at the same time.
- All of your sex partners from the past 60 days should be tested and treated.
- Because there is high risk for reinfection, avoid sexual contact for at least 1 week after treatment and until all of your current sex partners have been treated. You should also get retested 3 months after treatment.

## Questions for My Doctor

- Should I be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea?
- What should I do to avoid passing chlamydia and/or gonorrhea to my sex partners?
- What are the risks or side effects of antibiotics?
- Can I get infected again?
- If I am pregnant, how can I protect my baby?

## For More Information



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American Sexual Health Association  
[www.ashasexualhealth.org/chlamydia-101](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/chlamydia-101)  
[www.ashasexualhealth.org/gonorrhea](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/gonorrhea)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/stdfact-chlamydia.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/stdfact-chlamydia.htm)  
[www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/STDFact-gonorrhea.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/STDFact-gonorrhea.htm)