

# THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GONORRHEA AND CHLAMYDIA

In the Clinic  
Annals of Internal Medicine

## What are gonorrhea and chlamydia?

- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Gonorrhea is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*
- Chlamydia is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*
- The bacteria grow and multiply in warm, moist areas, including the mouth, throat, eyes, anus, urethra (tube carrying urine outside the body); and the cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes in women.
- May cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, which increases the risk for ectopic pregnancy (when fertilized egg grows outside the uterus) and infertility.
- May cause epididymitis in men (painful inflammation of the epididymis, the coiled tube behind the testicle that stores and carries sperm), which can cause infertility.

## What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms of gonorrhea and chlamydia are often mild and even absent.
- Burning during urination.
- Unusual or increased discharge from the vagina or penis.
- Painful or swollen testicles.
- Vaginal bleeding between periods.
- Rectal infection, which is characterized by discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, or painful bowel movements.
- Throat infection characterized by a sore throat.

## How are they treated?

- When taken as directed, appropriately prescribed antibiotics can cure the infection.
- If symptoms persist after treatment, return to a doctor for reevaluation.



- All sex partners should be evaluated, tested, and treated.
- Get retested 3 months after treatment of an initial infection to check for recurrence.
- Antibiotics will not repair any permanent damage caused by the disease, including infertility.

## How can they be prevented?

- The surest way is to abstain from sexual intercourse.
- Be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who was tested and is uninfected.
- Use latex condoms consistently and correctly.
- See a doctor immediately if any genital symptoms develop.
- If diagnosed and treated, notify all recent sex partners so they can seek treatment.
- Abstain from sexual intercourse for as long your doctor advises to prevent spreading the infection.
- Regular testing for gonorrhea and chlamydia may be advised by your doctor.

## For More Information

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html)  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/sexuallytransmitteddiseases/htm/index.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/sexuallytransmitteddiseases/htm/index.htm) (English)

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/tutorials/sexuallytransmitteddiseasesspanish/htm/index.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/tutorials/sexuallytransmitteddiseasesspanish/htm/index.htm) (Spanish)

Information on sexually transmitted diseases from the National Institutes of Health MedlinePlus, including an interactive tutorial in English and Spanish.

<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/tools/symptom/539.printerview.html> (men)

<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/tools/symptom/537.printerview.html> (women)

Chart listing genital problems in men and women and providing guidance about when to see a doctor from the American Academy of Family Physicians.

[www.mayoclinic.com/health/condoms/MY00654/METHOD=print](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/condoms/MY00654/METHOD=print)  
Information about condoms and their proper use from the Mayo Clinic.

# ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
INTERNAL MEDICINE | Doctors for Adults