

Chlamydia & Gonorrhea Screening

What are chlamydia and gonorrhea?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are common sexually transmitted infections (STI). They can infect both men and women and are very common among young people.

Chlamydia can cause serious, permanent damage. Women may even lose the ability to become pregnant and have children. Nearly 3 million cases of Chlamydia are reported each year to the CDC, but the actual number of cases is likely much higher. Among all age groups, teens and young adults have the highest rates of infection.

Gonorrhea can cause infections in the genitals, rectum and throat. It can lead to serious complications if left untreated. the actual number of gonorrhea cases in the U.S. each year is thought to be close to 820,000.

How could I get chlamydia or gonorrhea?

You might get chlamydia or gonorrhea by having sex with someone who has the infection. You would not know a person is infected, because he or she might not even know. “Having sex” means anal, vaginal, or oral sex. Chlamydia and gonorrhea can be transmitted even if a man does not ejaculate. People who have had chlamydia and been treated for it can be infected again if they have sex with an infected person.

What are the symptoms of chlamydia and gonorrhea?

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is known as a ‘silent’ infection because most infected people do not have any signs or symptoms. Even when it causes no symptoms, chlamydia can lead to infertility (not being able to get pregnant). For this reason, it’s important

for sexually active people to be tested regularly. This is called chlamydia screening. Some women with chlamydia have an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating.

Gonorrhea

Most women with gonorrhea do not have any noticeable symptoms. If there are symptoms they may include:

- painful or burning sensation when urinating
- increased vaginal discharge
- vaginal bleeding between periods.

These symptoms can often be mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection. With or without symptoms women with gonorrhea are at risk of developing serious complications if left untreated. For this reason, it is important for sexually active people to be tested for infection.

What happens if chlamydia and gonorrhea are not treated?

If not treated early, chlamydia and gonorrhea may cause serious health problems, including infertility.

If the infection spreads to the uterus and fallopian tubes it can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID is a serious disease that may lead to several problems:

- Severe pain that can be long-lasting
- Permanent damage to a woman's reproductive organs that would make it impossible for her to have children. This damage may also cause
- ectopic pregnancy - a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus. This condition can be life threatening.

Untreated chlamydia or gonorrhea may also increase a person's chance of getting HIV or infecting others with HIV.

Who should be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea?

If you are age 25 or younger and sexually active, we recommend yearly chlamydia testing and gonorrhea testing. This follows the national screening

recommendations from the United States Preventive Services Task Force. Talk to your healthcare provider about your risk factors so they can determine if you need more frequent testing.

If you are scheduled for a pelvic exam today, the doctor can take a cotton swab of your vagina to test for chlamydia and gonorrhea. Otherwise, you will need to provide a urine sample that will be tested in the lab.

Can chlamydia and gonorrhea be cured?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea can be **easily treated and cured** with antibiotics. If you have chlamydia or gonorrhea, **do not** have sex for seven days after taking a single-dose antibiotic, or until you complete an entire seven-day course of antibiotics. Do not have sex with an exposed partner until they have been treated.

Repeat infection is common. People whose sex partners have not been treated are at high risk for re-infection.

Having chlamydia or gonorrhea more than once increases your risk of serious health complications, including pelvic inflammatory disease and ectopic pregnancy. If you have chlamydia or gonorrhea, you may need to be re-tested about three months. Please discuss with your provider if you will need to be re-tested for chlamydia or gonorrhea.

What about partners?

If you are diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea you need to tell all anal, vaginal, or oral sex partners from the past 2 months so that they can see a doctor and get treatment. This will reduce the risk that the sex partners will develop serious complications from chlamydia or gonorrhea, and will also reduce the person's risk of becoming re-infected. A person with chlamydia or gonorrhea and all of his or her sex partners must avoid having sex until they have completed their treatment (i.e., seven days after a single dose of antibiotics or until completion of a seven-day course of antibiotics) and until they no longer have symptoms. For tips on talking to partners about sex and STD testing, visit <http://www.gytnow.org/talking-to-your-partner/>

How can chlamydia and gonorrhea be prevented?

Using latex male condoms, consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of getting or giving chlamydia or gonorrhea. The surest way to avoid sexually transmitted infections is to avoid vaginal, anal, and oral sex or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to not be infected.

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