



<http://www.womenshealth.gov>

1-800-994-9662

TDD: 1-888-220-5446

Chlamydia

Q: What is chlamydia and how common is it?

A: Chlamydia (kluh-MID-ee-uh) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). STIs are also called STDs, or sexually transmitted diseases. Chlamydia is an STI caused by bacteria called chlamydia trachomatis. Chlamydia is the most commonly reported STI in the United States. Women, especially young women, are hit hardest by chlamydia.

Women often get chlamydia more than once, meaning they are “reinfected.” This can happen if their sex partners were not treated. Reinfections place women at higher risk for serious reproductive health problems, such as infertility.

Q: How do you get chlamydia?

You get chlamydia from vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected person. Chlamydia often has no symptoms. So people who are infected may pass chlamydia to their sex partners without knowing it. The more sex partners you (or your partner) have, the higher your risk of getting this STI.

An infected mother can pass chlamydia to her baby during childbirth. Babies born to infected mothers can get pneumonia (nuh-MOHN-yuh) or infections in their eyes.

Q: What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

A: Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease. This is because 75 percent of infected women and at least half of infected men have no symptoms.

If symptoms do occur, they most often appear within 1 to 3 weeks of exposure. The infection first attacks the cervix and urethra. Even if the infection spreads to the uterus and fallopian tubes, some women still have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you may have:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Burning when passing urine
- Lower abdominal pain
- Low back pain
- Nausea
- Fever
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding between periods

Men with chlamydia may have:

- Discharge from the penis
- Burning when passing urine
- Burning and itching around the opening of the penis
- Pain and swelling in the testicles

The chlamydia bacteria also can infect your throat if you have oral sex with an infected partner.

Chlamydia is often not diagnosed or treated until problems show up. If you think you may have chlamydia, both you and your sex partner(s) should see a doctor right away — even if you have no symptoms.



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Chlamydia can be confused with gonorrhea (gahn-uh-REE-uh), another STI. These STIs have some of the same symptoms and problems if not treated. But they have different treatments.

Q: How is chlamydia diagnosed?

A: A doctor can diagnose chlamydia through:

- A swab test, where a fluid sample from an infected site (cervix or penis) is tested for the bacteria
- A urine test, where a urine sample is tested for the bacteria

A Pap test is *not* used to detect chlamydia.

Q: Who should get tested for chlamydia?

A: You should be tested for chlamydia once a year if you are:

- 25 or younger and have sex
- Older than 25 and:
 - Have a new sex partner
 - Have more than one sex partner
 - Have sex with someone who has other sex partners
 - Do not use condoms during sex within a relationship that is not mutually monogamous, meaning you or your partner has sex with other people
- Pregnant

You also should be tested if you have any symptoms of chlamydia.

Q: What is the treatment for chlamydia?

A: Antibiotics are used to treat chlamydia. If treated, chlamydia can be cured.

All sex partners should be treated to keep from getting chlamydia again. Do not have sex until you and your sex partner(s) have ended treatment.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant! Your doctor can give you an antibiotic that is commonly used during pregnancy.

Q: What should I do if I have chlamydia?

A: Chlamydia is easy to treat. But you should be tested and treated right away to protect your reproductive health. If you have chlamydia:

- **See a doctor right away.** Women with chlamydia are 5 times more likely to get HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, from an infected partner.
- **Follow your doctor's orders and finish all your antibiotics.** Even if symptoms go away, you need to finish all the medicine.
- **Don't engage in any sexual activity while being treated** for chlamydia.
- **Tell your sex partner(s)** so they can be treated.
- **See your doctor again if your symptoms don't go away** within 1 to 2 weeks after finishing the medicine.
- **See your doctor again within 3 to 4 months for another chlamydia test.** This is most important if your sex partner was not treated or if you have a new sex partner.

