

Chlamydia

What is it?

Chlamydia is a common sexually-transmissible infection (STI), caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Both men and women can have chlamydia. If someone has chlamydia, they can pass it on to their sexual partners (the people you have had sex with) through oral, vaginal and anal sex.

Chlamydia can be carried in the female cervix, the male urethra (tube in the penis which carries urine and sperm) and the throat and rectum of both sexes.

How do I know if I have it?

Chlamydia infection can cause a variety of symptoms ranging from no symptoms at all, to discharge from the vagina or penis, pain when passing urine and abnormal bleeding or pain in the lower abdomen. **It is very common to have no symptoms at all.**

This can mean that you are completely unaware of having chlamydia and unaware if you pass it on.

Tests:

Chlamydia can be tested for by either a urine or swab test. The doctor or nurse will explain which test is preferable for you and how it is done. The most common test done now for men is a urine test; women may have either a urine or swab test taken.

How do I prevent it?

The best protection against getting chlamydia is to use condoms (either male or female condoms) when having vaginal or anal sex. Condoms and dental dams can be used for oral sex to help prevent chlamydia infections. A dam is a thin latex sheet placed over (any part of) the body for safer oral sex.

How is it treated?

Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics, (usually just two tablets). It is important to treat all partners who have chlamydia, as you can get chlamydia infections more than once.

Remember, the treatment is simple, easy and effective but not receiving treatment can have serious results.

What happens if it is not treated?

If it is not treated, chlamydia can cause complications, the most important of which is infertility.

Women may get an infection (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease), in their uterus (womb) and tubes, which can prevent them from becoming pregnant in the future.

Men may experience complications eg testicular and lower abdominal pain.

For both sexes, the pain from the complications can be very distressing.

If a woman is pregnant and has chlamydia, it is possible to pass the infection on to a baby during delivery. This can affect the baby's eyes, nose, throat or lungs. Chlamydia can be treated during pregnancy, which will protect the baby.

What happens to my partner/s?

If you are found to have chlamydia, it is very important that your sexual partner/s are tested and have treatment. As people can be unaware they have chlamydia, it may be difficult to know who you got it from and how you were infected. Your doctor or nurse can help you with contacting your partner/s, or can arrange for this to be done anonymously.

Follow Up

If you have been diagnosed with chlamydia, your doctor or nurse will advise you to have repeat testing. It is important to have regular tests if you have new sexual partners because it is possible to be reinfected.

Safer Sex

Remember your best protection against sexually transmissible infections (STIs) is to use barrier protection such as condoms, female condoms and dams.



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